

# *The ART Quarterly*

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*Fig. 1. VALENCIENNES, Roof-deck in the Sunlight  
Paris, Louvre*



*Fig. 2. VALENCIENNES, Roof-deck in Shadow  
Paris, Louvre*



## PIERRE HENRI DE VALENCIENNES

By LIONELLO VENTURI

**I**T was a strange destiny that ruled the careers of the best landscapists of the Romantic period. And, although Pierre Henri de Valenciennes belonged to an earlier period, he, too, met the same fate. What happened to Constable and Corot, everyone knows. Their works, exhibited at the Royal Academy or the Salon, despite their merit, always contained unfortunate concessions to public taste, either in the finishing, or in the addition of figures. But other canvases which the artists finished for themselves, not for the public (that is, the painters left them as finished at the precise moment when they believed they had said all they had to say—nothing more, nothing less) were complete works of art, even masterpieces. These, however, were considered mere sketches and, with but few exceptions, were exhibited only after the death of the artists.

This difference in the conception of landscape painting on the part of the public and critics on one side, and the best painters on the other, was exceedingly harmful to pictorial production during the Romantic period. One of the chief merits of the Impressionist painters was their forcing on the public their so-called sketches as complete works of art.

Pierre Henri de Valenciennes achieved a certain degree of success during his lifetime by exhibiting paintings of "historical landscape" which were not wonderful by any means. And because he was judged solely by his work sent to the Salons, his name has faded from memory, or if some mention has been given him, it was by critics who have despised him for the past hundred years.

In 1930, the Princesse de Croy presented to the Louvre Museum hundreds of Valenciennes' gouaches, water colors, and drawings. They have been exhibited from time to time, but none has been hung permanently in the galleries of the Museum. I here reproduce nine gouaches.

No. 1. ROOF-DECK IN THE SUNLIGHT ( $7\frac{1}{8}$ " x  $14\frac{3}{8}$ " )

No. 2. ROOF-DECK IN SHADOW ( $7\frac{1}{8}$ " x  $12\frac{1}{4}$ " )

On both of these gouaches, Valenciennes noted: "loggia a Roma."

No. 3. PORTA DEL POPOLO (6" x  $18\frac{1}{2}$ " )

Notation: "porta del populo in Roma."

No. 4. MONTE CAVALLO ( $10\frac{5}{8}$ " x 15" )

"Monte Cavallo" is the location of Quirinal Square which offers an extensive view beyond Rome.

- No. 5. TORRE DELLE MILIZIE (77/8" x 201/8")

Notation: "A Monte Cavallo a Roma." This is the view looking towards the Torre delle Milizie, seen in the left corner, after having left Quirinal Square.

- No. 6. ROMAN LANDSCAPE (63/4" x 141/8")

- No. 7. VILLA FARNESE AT THE PALATINO (101/4" x 151/8")

Notation: "a villa farnese."

- No. 8. ROMAN LANDSCAPE (103/8" x 15")

Notation: "A Rome."

- No. 9. ROMAN LANDSCAPE

All these gouaches may be dated between 1778 and 1780. Their unique motif is simply how Rome appeared to Valenciennes. In contrast, we recall Piranesi and Hubert Robert.

Piranesi, who died the very year Valenciennes arrived in Rome, was discussed in the latter's *Elémens de Perspective Pratique, à l'Usage des Artistes, Suivis de Reflexions et Conseils à un Elève sur la Peinture et Particulièrement sur le Genre de Paysage*, Paris, 1799-1800, p. 634.<sup>1</sup> "Piranesi," he said, "did not tell the history but the romance of Rome. He composed marvelous theatrical decorations without any style. . . . He pictured Rome a wonderful city such as the imagination of an excited mind might conceive, without any rational knowledge of antiquity." Valenciennes, therefore, refrained from introducing in his Roman landscapes the romantic element which is the eternal glory of Piranesi.

If he appreciated Piranesi with some reservations, he must have disliked Hubert Robert, the best exponent of that elegant and frivolous charm which eighteenth century artists gave to Roman ruins. Valenciennes mentioned Joseph Vernet's criticism of the disposition of the pond of Apollo at Versailles, which was the work of Hubert Robert, saying that it was not sufficiently natural (*Elémens*, p. 352). Another remark made by Valenciennes is general, but includes Hubert Robert: "Unfortunately, most artists who go to Rome . . . devote themselves to views and scenes which have already been painted. It is this servile routine which hampers genius and results in the mediocrity of most painters." (*Elémens*, p. 600).

This is why, in Rome, Valenciennes did not portray the Colosseum and St. Peter's, but, as shown in figures 1 and 2, he chose the section of a roof which contained an enclosed deck for the drying of clothes in the sun. The architectural motif, therefore, does not exist, or rather—there is no motif with any particular interest. This conglomeration of structural pieces without form portrayed against the sky has a poetic value because they are simple, humble



*Fig. 3. VALENCIENNES, Porta del Popolo  
Paris, Louvre*



*Fig. 4. VALENCIENNES, "Monte Cavallo"  
Paris, Louvre*



*Fig. 5. VALENCIENNES, Torre delle Milizie  
Paris, Louvre*



*Fig. 6. VALENCIENNES, Roman Landscape  
Paris, Louvre*



objects; because they belong to nature and to life—everyday life. With this poetry in his soul, Valenciennes, the painter, fixed the moment when the sun created the sharpest contrasts of light and shade, in a desperate attempt to give form to things without form, and contrarily, fixed the moment when the sun had vanished, leaving the roof a confused mass of shadow against the sky. Lack of form has infinite gradations. If it is true that we may speak only ironically of the form of the chimney in these gouaches, then there is no doubt that its plastic form is far more determined by contrasts of light and shade than by complete shadow. Valenciennes succeeded in giving high pictorial value to the contours of the shadows against the light sky.

The coloring is very simple: the roofs brown; the walls grey; the laundry white-grey; the sky light blue with whitish clouds. Despite this simplicity, a marvelous chromatic effect is achieved. As in a Corot, the chromatic beauty lies in the grey which harmonizes the brown and the blue.

Motif, form, and color are perfectly coherent. There is the artistic consciousness of the beauty of the humble and the simple in nature as in form and color. There is the conviction that a simple fragment can encompass all of nature, humanity included, because it lives and thrives on light, the common source of life for all nature.

More than forty years later, in 1822, Constable contemplated passing clouds for two hours and a half and then executed two small masterpieces (Collection of Sir Farquhar Buzzard) showing their changing forms in two succeeding moments, without any attempt to represent the earth.

A cloud in the sky over England, a roof silhouetted against the sky in Rome, held the same value for Constable as for Valenciennes — a motif without a motif, something which must be "inglorious" to be intimate, a casual fragment to contain a complete soul.

Corot's reason for not following Constable was that Valenciennes had already inspired him with the same spiritual attribute of humility towards and faithfulness to nature. If Theodore Rousseau and other landscapists of 1830 looked to Constable and the Dutch masters, it may have been because they knew Valenciennes only by his historical landscapes exhibited in the Salons. However, these two gouaches are neither romantic nor realistic. Centering his interest in the effect of light, Valenciennes endorsed Impressionistic aesthetics almost a century before the birth of Impressionism.

"The city of Rome offers great interest to a landscapist . . . because of the charming buildings which decorate the world's capital. Their individuality

increases their picturesqueness. . . . The mingling of ancient and modern; the combination of irregularity and symmetry, of incoherence and harmony, of folly and reason, form a whole which is original and is found only in Italy—particularly in Rome. Besides, many convents with few windows and large uninterrupted surfaces produce a calm and spacious effect which further augments the severity of style, in its restfulness to the eyes. They present a perfect contrast to the minute details necessary to the picturesque composition of many buildings or parts of a single structure. All these isolated or concentrated buildings have slightly sloping roofs with a deck for the drying of clothes or for a cool breath of evening air; they have special coloring in the materials of their construction; few chimneys; and a form which differs in public edifices and private dwellings. All these buildings sometimes in harmony, sometimes in contrast, but always united in a noble manner, constitute the whole which gives the principal cities of Italy their original physiognomy. The hot climate of Rome produces a vigorous color in the vegetation not to be found in northern climes; the earth is of a warmer hue; the rocks show up in stronger relief; the greens are darker and more varied; the sky bluer; the clouds more vibrant and colorful" (*Elémens*, pp. 595-6).

Thus did Valenciennes in 1799-1800 revive his memories of 1778-1780. Figure 3 shows his talent for combining uninterrupted surfaces and picturesque details; zones of light and zones of shade in clear contrast; the intermingling of modern, rudely constructed buildings with old dignified monuments. On the surface, forms are balanced by the compounding of folly and reason. Colors are variously harmonized according to three ideal planes in depth:

First plane: violet-grey walls and yellow roofs

Second plane: green, violet-grey and grey

Third plane: yellow-grey and sky-blue

At close range, the violet and yellow sing vibrantly; in the distance, the contrasts vanish. Forms are organized on the surface, colors in depth, showing the accord of linear and aerial perspective which Valenciennes particularly stressed in his theory. But beyond the perfect composition of form and color, there are in this gouache delicacy of touch, candour, and grace, which are his art.

Figure 4 shows a vast horizon with ominous clouds as seen by Valenciennes from Monte Cavallo. It is a romantic motif, but not a romantic treatment. Apparently, Valenciennes found delight in portraying the tremendous conflict in the portentous sky and in giving a tiny zone to the earth, with the pyra-



*Fig. 7. VALENCIENNES, Villa Farnese at the Palatino  
Paris, Louvre*



*Fig. 8. VALENCIENNES, Roman Landscape  
Paris, Louvre*



*Fig. 9. VALENCIENNES, Roman Landscape*  
*Paris, Louvre*



*Fig. 10. VALENCIENNES, At Chisseaux*  
*Paris, Louvre*



midal shape of the mountain further emphasizing the monumentality of the sky. The trees are dark green; the houses yellow-grey; the roofs brown; the mountain light blue; the clouds pink and yellow in the blue sky. It all represents a hymn to the clouds.

In gouache number 5, the contrast of light and shade on the houses is a contrast of pink and brown. The transversal composition suggests endless space beyond. The grey of the distant houses, the rose-grey of the sky are in perfect accord with the feeling of space.

Number 6 shows how greatly Valenciennes was impressed by the monumentality of the building and the umbrella pine. The coloring is less alive than in the preceding gouaches: green and brown in the foreground, and grey in the distance.

Number 7, with its accentuated contrast of light and shade, has very brilliant coloring. The rock is a vivid red; the houses grey or light brown among the dark greens; the clouds white or grey-blue in a light sky. This vision of the contrasts of colors representing light and shade, echoed in the contrast of the distant clouds, forms the motif of the picture. Valenciennes was not interested in the architectural aspect of the Villa Farnese. He wanted a rock without plastic form in the foreground so that he could give it pictorial form. Furthermore, he was interested in a mass of trees, and in statues on a terrace which quite properly suggested flaming lights.

Gouaches number 8 and 9 are of particular interest in their composition because of the harmony between perpendicular and horizontal lines, a harmony which gives a sense of solidity and at the same time an impulse towards the sky. Moreover, the contrasts of light and shade, and the free pictorial touches are very beautiful. But what strikes the observer in comparing both pictures is the inclusion of Roman ruins as a casual element, as a simple pictorial motif. The simple modern houses of number 8 are given far greater importance in the motif than the ruins in the other.

Among the large collection of gouaches by Valenciennes in the Louvre, there exist many on a par with the ones reproduced in these pages as well as many of inferior quality. Almost all of them were conceived with the interest centered in the pictorial motif totally disregarding the topographical or historical aspect of the place represented. The pictorial motif is concerned with atmospheric phenomena: rain, tempests, sunlight. Rome, Tivoli, Nemi, Velletri, Rocca di Papa, are merely frames for these atmospheric effects. In Rome,

where so many landscapists before him had gone to discover classic wonders, Valenciennes discovered painting in itself.

Of Valenciennes' drawings belonging to the Louvre, only a small number are separate, the majority being bound in seven albums. One album, dated 1775, is composed of studies of the environs of Paris and the Touraine. The other six represent his travels in Italy.

The water-color reproduced in figure 10 on which Valenciennes noted "à chisseau", belongs to the album of 1775. It is a fine landscape in eighteenth century taste with a charming interest in details. At Chisseaux, near Tours, there is a small castle of the Renaissance which is shown in the middle ground. The only motif suggesting Valenciennes' later style is the farm in the foreground with its accents of light.

How vastly different in style are the two landscapes in figures 11 and 12!<sup>2</sup> Evidently, Rome was responsible for Valenciennes' awakening, revealing to him the synthetic vision, which is the artistic vision. His drawing no longer consisted of many trees in a series, but of the distribution of light and shade in the proper proportion so as to bring out that amplitude, that severity, that religious fervor which constituted the sentiment of this artist. Everywhere in Italy, even in the gardens, Valenciennes felt a "religious note which belongs to this country" (*Elémens*, p. 595). The solitude of Roman Campagna, two miles from Ponte Molle (Fig. 11) and the infinite vastness of the country en route to Orvieto (Fig. 12) are perfectly expressed.

This album also contains the water-color entitled, *Bords du Tibre du côté de la porte du peuple* (The banks of the Tiber near the Porta del Popolo) (Fig. 13). Through the contrast of light and shade, the great mass of buildings becomes a fine aggregation of volumes.

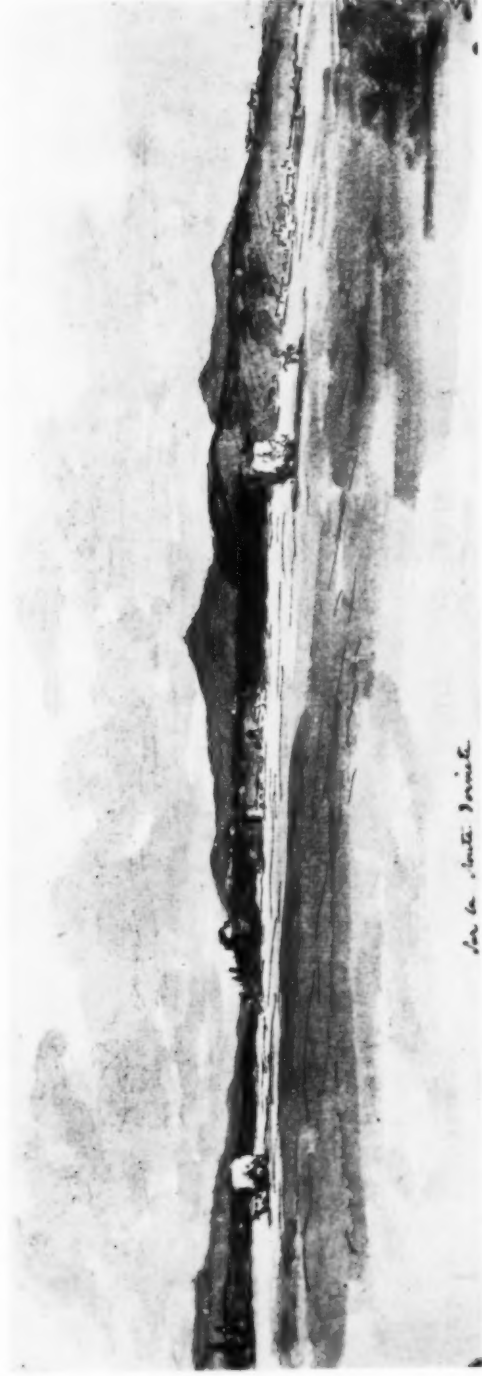
All these water-colors are monochrome, but their mass is visualized as an ensemble of zones anticipating coloring. There is a suggestion of chromatic touches everywhere. They are volumes, that is, masses impregnated with colors instead of plastic forms which always require precise contours.

Valenciennes was very sensitive to linear values, but his lines were not definite contours. They were pictorial touches indicating the reflection of light on the boundary of forms. Two simple crayon drawings of trees (Figs. 15 and 16)<sup>3</sup> are excellent examples of his ability to suggest chromatic value even in a contour, and thus animate a leafless tree.

The journey which Valenciennes made to Italy marked the turning point in his career. At Toulouse where he was born on December 6, 1750,<sup>4</sup> he had



*Fig. 11. VALENCIENNES, Near Ponte Molle  
Paris, Louvre*



*Fig. 12. VALENCIENNES, En Route to Orvieto  
Paris, Louvre*



Fig. 13. VALENCIENNES, *Banks of the Tiber*  
Paris, Louvre



Fig. 14. VALENCIENNES, *An Episode in the Legend of Belisarius*  
Toulouse, Museum



studied at the Académie Royale de Peinture under Jean-Baptiste Despax (1709-1773) and Jean-Pierre Rivalz (1718-1785) whose forefather, Anthony, had collaborated with Poussin. It is probable that in Toulouse, Valenciennes was taught seventeenth century tradition. But under the protection of Guillaume de Mondran, a correspondent of Voltaire and Marmontel, he could leave Toulouse for Paris where he went in 1773 and probably earlier. There he entered the school of Gabriel Francois Doyen (1726-1806), a painter who had gained some renown as a colorist, and has been called a link between the Baroque and Romanticism. Besides, Valenciennes needed a thorough knowledge of perspective, which he obtained from Joseph Vernet (1714-1789), the landscape painter who is considered the *trait d'union* between Claude Lorraine and Corot.<sup>5</sup> In spite of this and Valenciennes' high opinion of him (*Elémens*, XVII, XXI, pp. 220, 243, etc.) there is no trace in Vernet's work of the interest we found in Valenciennes' gouaches of Rome. However, Doyen's coloring and Vernet's perspective rigour were helpful to Valenciennes in pointing the way to a fuller understanding of painting than was common in his day.

Judging from the albums of his drawings, we may assume that Valenciennes worked in Rome and its environs during 1778 and 1780, and that in 1779 he visited Naples and Sicily. It does not appear that he was in close touch with the French Academy while in Rome.<sup>6</sup> In 1781, he left Italy by way of Florence, Lombardy, the Simplon, Geneva, and Lyons (Album RF12970). Back in Paris, his fame rapidly grew and, in homage to his knowledge of perspective, he was made a member of the Royal Academy in Paris in 1787.<sup>7</sup> In 1789, Cochin judged Valenciennes' paintings second only to Van Loo's.<sup>8</sup>

Success demanded his deference to public taste, and no painting, to our knowledge, executed after his return from Italy, can be compared with his gouaches of Rome in their originality both of conception and execution. In 1789, Valenciennes painted for the Château de la Muette, built by the Comte d'Artois, two large landscapes now in a New York private collection. Here reproduced is one called *The Stone Bridge*, signed "De Valenciennes 1789" (Fig. 17) (5'4½" x 4'6¾"). It is a charming theme with a well-balanced composition, a dignified aspect and great richness of motifs from the stone bridge to the thatched cottage, from the magnificent trees to the simple grass, colored in delicate nuances of grey-green, white-blue, white-yellow. It is a more solid and more carefully executed work; truer in aerial perspective, and less brilliant than one of Hubert Robert's.

The results were even more disastrous when he painted historical landscapes.

The Museum of Toulouse owns three oil paintings by Valenciennes.<sup>9</sup> One reproduced in figure 14 is entitled *An Episode in the Legend of Belisarius* and is dated "An II", 1793-4 (24 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ "). Valenciennes returned to his old ambition of becoming a second Poussin, suggested to him in his early days in Toulouse, and either lost the keen creative imagination he had developed in Rome or the finesse and elegance he had inherited from the Parisian tradition.

Valenciennes was an humble man, and did not dare to oppose the prevailing neo-classic taste. His portrait, drawn by J. M. Moreau and engraved by A. de Saint-Aubin in 1788 (Fig. 18) because he was an amateur musician, pictures him as an eighteenth century gentleman.

Valenciennes felt convinced of the inferiority of his own genre, the landscape, in comparison with historical genre; besides, he tried to incorporate in his painting as much science as he could—either the science of perspective or of history, like Poussin's. All this increased his success as a teacher, and his school became famous. In 1802, Landon wrote that Valenciennes "has trained the majority of our best young landscapists".<sup>10</sup> To his pupils he devoted his book on perspective from which we have already quoted. The first edition appeared in 1799-1800. When the first printing was exhausted, he prepared a new edition with corrections and additions, which was published in 1820, a year after his death. This book tells the story of his experiences as an artist better than the pictures he executed after his Roman gouaches, and it will also preserve his name in the history of art, as well as these Roman gouaches. Naturally, it contains a good deal about historical art, and the idealization of nature, etc. But the important fact is that he included some of his own experiences and meditations which I shall try to summarize.

In landscape painting, there are two ways of regarding nature, each with infinite nuances. In the first, we see nature as she is; the arrangement depends on the choice of the artist as to what he considers the most suitable and picturesque. In the second, we see nature as she might be if she could commune with the spirit. The first might be illustrated by Ruysdael's *Rainy Weather*, the second by Poussin's *Universal Flood*. The first example is painted with the *sentiment of color*; the second with the *color of sentiment* (*Elémens*, pp. 380-3).

Valenciennes' preference is of course the second method, but he maintains that a thorough study must be made of nature as she is, to obtain a true sentiment of color. Toward the end of his life, he wondered why no painter could combine perfection of *drawing* with perfection of *coloring*. His conception



Fig. 16. VALENCIENNES, *A Tree*  
Paris, Louvre



Fig. 15. VALENCIENNES, *A Tree*  
Paris, Louvre



Fig. 17. VALENCIENNES, *The Stone Bridge*  
New York, Private Collection

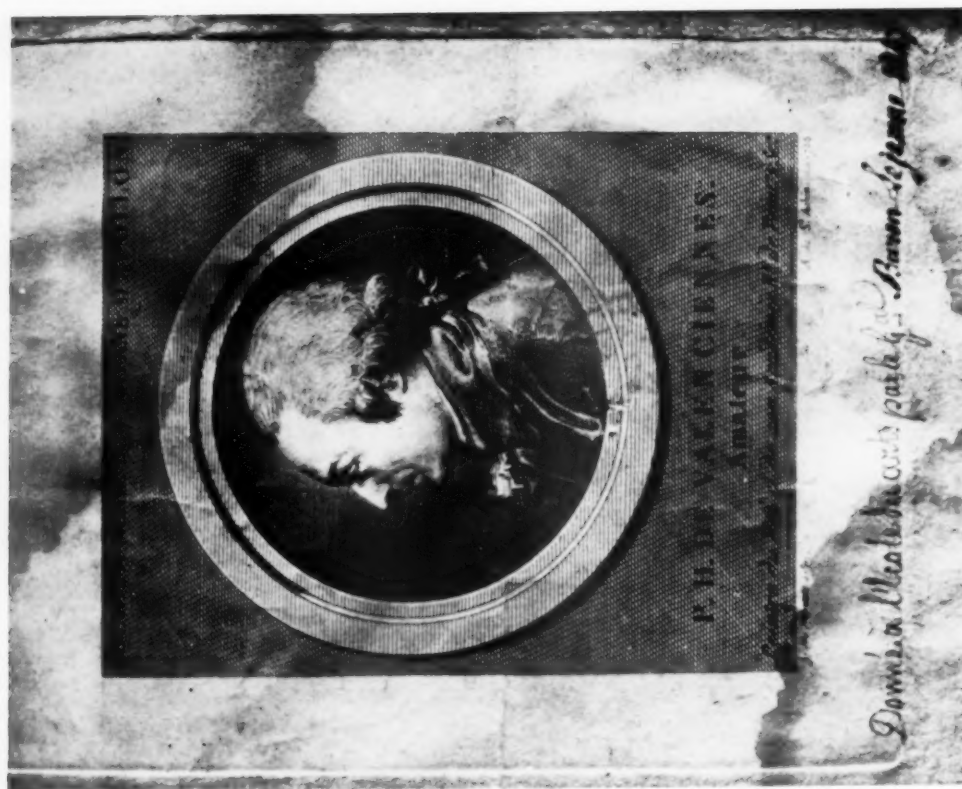


Fig. 18. PORTRAIT OF VALENCIENNES,  
Engraved by A. de Saint-Aubin  
Toulouse, Museum



of drawing is the same as Winckelmann's whom he quotes: "a choice of forms conventionally considered fine and noble in order to attain ideal beauty." It is the "science of drawing" made through study, meditation and comparison. "On the contrary, the colorist is almost always moved by a consuming fire, dominated by an unshaken enthusiasm; . . . his only guide for the harmonious effect he conceives in his work, is often an exalted imagination and a flux of unmeditated ideas. The beauty of his paintings is based on virgin and not too elaborate tints; on freshness and harmony; on the abundance of lights; on the perfect mutual accord of light and shade and their contrasts; and finally on the brilliancy of the effect." Drawing is understood by calm and analytical artists; color by the impetuous and passionate ones. Color detracts from drawing as drawing destroys the enthusiasm of color. When Rubens endeavored to improve his drawing, he impaired his coloring; when Raphael tried to better his coloring, he weakened his drawing. (This is an addition made in the second edition of *Elémens*, pp. 331-333).

If we realize that Valenciennes' conception of drawing was the neo-classic conception of Winckelmann and David, we are aware that Valenciennes was correct as well as daring. If we remember that the romantic struggle in painting did not begin until 1824, five years after Valenciennes' death, we are conscious that he, more than any one in his time, foreshadowed Delacroix as a painter and a theorist.

After that, we can readily understand why Valenciennes stressed the importance of aerial perspective. Without the feeling of atmosphere, it is impossible to have harmony and truth in painting (*Elémens*, p. 262). But even aerial perspective is not enough, as for example in the representation of clouds. They are composed of moving forms which can be painted only with the *perspective of sentiment* (pp. 219-20). Brush-touches, the finishing of the picture also depend on this perspective of sentiment (pp. 239-41). Painters must not fear the opposition of tints, the proximity of spots of contrasting colors because a natural harmony embraces them all (p. 249). Local colors depend on the quality of light (pp. 262, 271). Pure and definite colors give strength and warmth to painting (p. 275). Shadows must be colored. Shadows always have an element of blue varying according to local tone. The shadow of white is blue; of yellow a greenish hue; of red, violet (p. 285).

There is a certain mockery directed against the painters of historical subjects who always need a model for painting and never regard nature. "We have seen a painter pose a model on a very hard mattress surrounded with greenish

taffeta in order to portray Venus in the Bath", "and he had never before observed the color of the atmosphere around a fountain" (*Elémens*, pp. 291-3). The great difficulty in painting nature is the continual shifting of light. A painter has not sufficient time to see all the colors in a landscape before the changing light has also altered the colors. The only way to overcome this difficulty is to pick out the principal tones and find their harmony without attention to details. An effect of color in nature cannot last longer than two hours, and because the light differs every day, it is impossible to return and continue the study on the following day. It is true that a landscape cannot be finished in two hours, but the truth of the general harmony cannot be sacrificed in an attempt to finish it. Later, in the studio, a "memory work" can be made following what has been taken from nature (pp. 404-8).

These few quotations give a general idea of the sensibility, finesse, and experiences Valenciennes set forth in his book. They are enough, I hope, to show how far he digressed from the rigid rules of his contemporaries, towards Romantic, Realistic and even Impressionistic theories. This is why some parts of his treatise coincide so well with the gouaches of his Roman period.

\* \* \*

His relations with the French Academy in Paris are interesting as a revelation of Valenciennes' character, and of the conditions in his life.

The first year after his nomination<sup>11</sup> to the Academy, he was very punctual at the meetings. In 1789, he became less regular. The Revolution brought instability to the Academy, and hindered its normal procedure. Its constitution appeared too narrow both as to the category of painters excluded, and the members belonging to the inferior class. In the old régime, there were three classes of painters: the "Officers," that is, those attached to some office, and the only ones entitled to vote at the meetings; the ordinary members like Valenciennes, who could attend the meetings and express an opinion; and those admitted to the Academy, but who were not, strictly speaking, members, and had only the right to exhibit at the Salons. Both members and non-members objected to these inequalities. Heading this movement of dissension was David, who endeavored to remove from the Academy the control of artistic manifestations.

A number of members were then united at the instigation of David, and made an appeal to the Royal Academy for a revision of its by-laws.<sup>12</sup> Valenciennes was one of the signers of this petition December 5, 1789. Nevertheless, while a small number of members, under the leadership of David, continued

to hold special meetings, the name of Valenciennes and other artists ceased to appear in the records of the dissenters or in the address which they sent to the Committee on February 25, 1790. After December 5, 1789, Valenciennes did not appear at the meetings of the Academy until February 27, 1790.<sup>13</sup>

On that particular day, Vien, Director of the Academy, made an appeal for peace among the artists and accepted, in general, the nomination of representatives set forth in the petition of December 5th. Harmony, however, did not last very long, for at two meetings later, David protested against the fact that the third class had not been allowed to vote for the representatives. The Academy decided to interpret this complaint as David's resignation, and named Valenciennes as representative in his place. He and David were therefore divided on this important issue.

However, trouble continued to brew in the Academy. At the meeting held September 25th, a large majority of members, in spite of the fact that Director Vien had opened the meeting, requested the secretary, Renou, to enter in the verbal proceedings of the Academy the address sent by several members to the National Academy, without the consent of Vien. This was the last meeting which Valenciennes attended although the Academy, deprived of its rights, continued to exist until August 8, 1793.

Thus Valenciennes showed a more moderate and discreet attitude than David's followers, and later retired to voluntary seclusion. It would probably be hazardous to draw conclusions from the little information just given as to his political opinions regarding the Revolution. We shall simply mention that an anecdote he related pictures the entourage of Philippe Egalité<sup>14</sup> and that the name of one of his patrons, the Baron de Montesquiou, recalls one of the noble families who joined forces in the Revolution and prepared the constitutional government.<sup>15</sup>

Valenciennes' estrangement from the factions however resulted in his exclusion from the Institute.<sup>16</sup> In fact, after the Salon of 1791, there was a dispute about choosing the jury for the award of prizes. A jury of forty-five was formed, of which twenty were elected by the Academy members, twenty by non-members, and five by the Department of Paris. Valenciennes was elected by the Academy members, but tendered his resignation after the beginning of the meetings with a letter in which he begged to be left in peace.<sup>17</sup>

As a matter of fact, the name of Valenciennes does not again appear during the troubled period of the Revolution, either in the list of painters in charge of official functions, or among those mentioned as patriots and democrats.

He is mentioned regularly only in the lists of the Salons which he never missed.<sup>18</sup> He continued to frequent the Louvre, where he acquired a studio in 1787, and the Hotel de Bullion where many other painters also lived until the quarters at the Louvre were abolished by Napoleon, during whose reign he moved to the Cité, next door to the Prefect of Police and lived there to the end of his days.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the fact that he had presented his treatise to the Institute, and that his name was among the candidates submitted to Napoleon for nomination<sup>20</sup> he remained an outsider until 1815.<sup>21</sup> In 1804, he was made a member of the Legion of Honor;<sup>22</sup> on July 14, 1812, he was appointed instructor of perspective at the Beaux-Arts school.<sup>23</sup> At this time his public life as a painter diminished. After 1810 he exhibited only one picture and that was at the Salon of 1814. He died in Paris, February 18, 1819,<sup>25</sup> and—some months later, at the Salon of 1819, a picture on which he had worked during his last year was judged by all the critics as "the ruins of a great talent."<sup>24</sup>

Among Valenciennes' pupils were Bertin, Castellan, Deperthes, Duperreux, Lejeune, Michallon.<sup>26</sup> Bertin and Michallon were Corot's teachers. We have previously pointed out that Valenciennes' moral and aesthetic attitude towards nature in his Roman gouaches is very similar to that shown in Corot's paintings of his early Roman period. Furthermore the conception of sharp contrast in light and shade for the pictorial representation of the Roman buildings was unique in Valenciennes' art before the time of Corot, and therefore was inherited by Corot. Moreover, water-color number 13 is obviously similar to the *Ile et Pont San Bartolomeo* of Corot (Robaut, No. 147); the synthetic view of number 11 is to be seen in the *Volterra* of Corot (No. 304). Drawings number 14 and 15 show much resemblance to a drawing Corot made in 1826 at Civita Castellana (Robaut, No. 2505). Further comparisons could be made with hundreds of Valenciennes' water-colors. Corot first began his study of painting in 1822, too late to have known Valenciennes. The question has often been asked, "What could his mediocre teachers, Michallon and Victor Bertin have given Corot?" The answer is now obvious. They taught him Valenciennes' aesthetics. It is these aesthetics which gave Corot a taste so remote from that of other painters of 1830; a greater consciousness of style, a synthesis, and a unity and contrast of tones.

When Valenciennes died, the two most eminent critics of that time, Eméric David and Etienne Delécluze declared that he had been responsible for the revival of landscape painting.<sup>27</sup> After that he was lost in oblivion. Charles



Blanc criticized him as entirely lacking in talent,<sup>28</sup> and all the others reiterated this statement. Francois Benoit even ridiculed Valenciennes' treatise.<sup>29</sup>

Recently, some critics have had a clearer understanding. In 1934 some of Valenciennes' gouaches were shown at the Paris exhibition of French artists in Italy from Poussin to Renoir, and these gouaches suggested to Mr. Vaudoyer the idea that "the delicate, sensitive Valenciennes quietly heralded Corot."<sup>30</sup> However, true artists did not forget him, as is demonstrated in an unpublished letter of December 14, 1883, written by Camille Pissarro to his son, Lucien, who had asked his father's advice about a treatise on painting, and Camille Pissarro recommended the *Elémens* of Valenciennes "as still the best and most practical." We can now understand this choice. Some of Valenciennes' experiences had paved the way for a constructive Impressionism like that of Pissarro—and Cézanne.

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from Valenciennes' book have been taken from the above-mentioned first edition with one exception to which special attention is called.

<sup>2</sup> They belong to an album of Rome, dated 1778 (33/4" x 103/4")

<sup>3</sup> Also in the Louvre. Single sheets N. RF13060 and RF13061 (6" x 31/2" each).

<sup>4</sup> Baron Desazars de Montgailhard, *Les Artistes Toulousains*, Toulouse-Paris, 1924.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Réau, *Histoire de la Peinture Française au XVIIIe Siècle*, Paris, Bruxelles, 1926, II, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> No mention of him in *Correspondence des Directeurs de l'Académie*.

<sup>7</sup> *Procès-Verbaux de l'Académie Royale de Peinture* T. IX, p. 315.

<sup>8</sup> Goncourt, *L'Art du XVIIIe Siècle*, Vol. II, p. 83.

<sup>9</sup> Ville de Toulouse, *Bulletin Municipal*, 39e année, No. 7, July, 1935.

<sup>10</sup> *Nouvelles des Arts*, T. II, 1802, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> *Procès-Verbaux de l'Académie*, T. IX and X.

<sup>12</sup> J. L. Jules David, *Le Peintre Louis David*, p. 66.

<sup>13</sup> *Procès-Verbaux*, T. IX and X.

<sup>14</sup> *Elémens* p. 350.

<sup>15</sup> *Livret du Salon de 1789*, No. 122. The Baron de Montesquiou must be Elisée Pierre de Montesquiou. He kept aloof during the Revolution. His father died General of the Republic and President of a Constitutional Club.

<sup>16</sup> *Biographie Toulousaine*, Paris, 1923, Vol. II, pp. 458-60.

<sup>17</sup> Marc Furcy-Raynaud, *Procès-Verbaux des Assemblées du Jury élu par les artistes exposant au Salon de 1791*, Paris, 1906, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> He took part in the exhibition of 1789; 1791 (third year of Independence); 1793, (second year of the Republic); years IV, V, VI, VIII, IX, X, XII, 1806, 1810, 1814, 1819.

<sup>19</sup> *Nouv. Arch. de l'Art Fr.* 1873, p. 103, Valenciennes is mentioned as living at the Hotel de Bullion, rue Platrière, later rue J. J. Rousseau, from 1791 to 1793. He then lived at the Louvre until 1801. In 1803, rue St. Louis du Blais, near the Prefect of Police, No. 38; in 1814, No. 18 Quai des Orfèvres (information gleaned from the registers of the Salons and from the *Almanach des Arts* for 1803).

<sup>20</sup> *Magasin Encyclopédique*, T. V (1801), pp. 37-39.

<sup>21</sup> Benoit, *L'Art Français sous la Révolution et l'Empire*, 1897, p. 181.

<sup>22</sup> Mention of member of the Legion of Honor is in the *Livret du Salon* from 1804 on.

<sup>23</sup> Benoit, p. 206.

<sup>24</sup> Gault de Saint Germain, *Choix des Productions*, p. 90; Délecluze, *Lycée Français*, T. II, 1819, p. 498.

<sup>25</sup> *Biographie Toulousaine* II, p. 460.

<sup>26</sup> Benoit, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

<sup>27</sup> *Le Moniteur Universel*, December 9, 1819 and *Lycée Français*, T. II, 1819, pp. 417-28.

<sup>28</sup> *Histoire des Peintres de Toutes les Ecoles, Ecole Française*, Vol. III, Appendice, p. 36.

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 135, 191, 194, 195, 206, 357-8.

<sup>30</sup> Preface to the *Catalogue*, p. XIV.

## AN INSCRIPTION BY JOHN HESSELIUS ON A PORTRAIT IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

By LOUISE BURROUGHS

WHEN an old relining canvas was removed from the portrait in The Metropolitan Museum of Art known as *Mistress Anne Galloway* by Gustavus Hesselius, an inscription was disclosed which establishes once and for all the identity of both the artist and the sitter of this disputed painting. It also provides the keystone upon which its history has now been reconstructed so that we have in it a fully documented portrait to add to the list of works by John Hesselius. Although some of the letters are faint the inscription (Fig. 3) clearly reads: "Sophia Galloway Aetat. 67/J Hesselius Pinx 1764."<sup>1</sup>

As this portrait (Fig. 1) has been frequently published and much discussed it is pertinent, in the light of this discovery, to restate its recent history. It was purchased by The Metropolitan Museum in 1922 from Mrs. Carroll Mercer whose husband had inherited it from the Galloways. According to family tradition it had been painted by Hesselius shortly after 1721. Accepting this date, various Galloway descendants agreed that it portrayed Anne (Webb) Galloway of West River, Maryland, who was born about 1632 and died in 1723. The painting therefore took its place as one of the earliest of the works of Gustavus Hesselius (1682-1755).<sup>2</sup> The style of the costume, however, indicated a later period than the 1720's and, as the works of the two Hesseliuses became better known, the attribution to the elder was more and more frequently challenged. Mr. William Sawitzky in particular has been for some time confident that it was by John and that it could not have been painted earlier than 1750. Mr. Sawitzky's fine connoisseurship needs no support, but it is a pleasure to be able to produce in this inscription so indisputable a confirmation of this judgment.

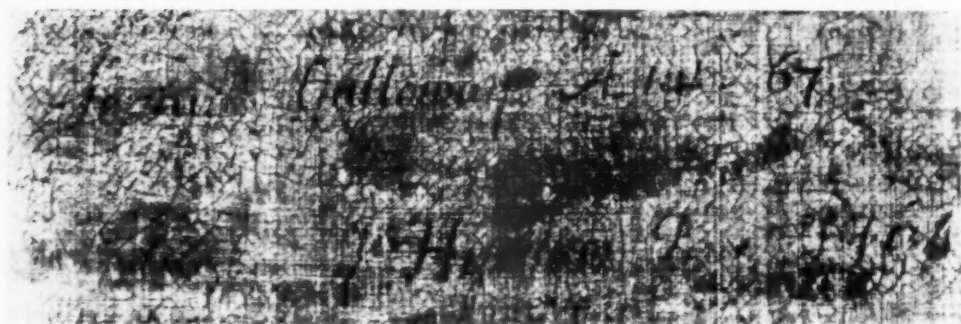
John Hesselius, the son of Gustavus, was born in 1728. His father had come to America from Sweden in 1711 and practised painting in Maryland and Pennsylvania, settling in Philadelphia in 1735 where he died in 1755. The son followed his father's profession and was painting portraits in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, from 1750 to 1777. For the years 1759-1762 the portraits which are listed by Theodore Bolton and George Groce in their catalogue<sup>3</sup> of John Hesselius's work are all of Marylanders: John Bolton,



*Fig. 1. JOHN HESSELIUS, Mrs. Richard Galloway, Jr., née Sophia Richardson  
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



*Fig. 2. JOHN HESSELIUS, Mrs. Gavin Lawson, née Susannah Rose  
Hugh D. Rose Collection*



*Fig. 3. JOHN HESSELIUS, Inscription on the back of the Portrait reproduced in Fig. 1  
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



Thomas Marsh, the Calvert children, Samuel Lloyd Chew and his wife, and Mrs. Smith, née Elizabeth Chew. To the last three, dated 1762, the Galloway portrait comes close in time and it is interesting to note that the same wording is used in the inscriptions on all four of these canvases.

Research in the genealogy of the Galloway family (which was one of the earliest to settle in West River, Anne Arundel County, Maryland) reveals that the Sophia portrayed in this painting was the daughter of William and Margaret Richardson, also of West River, and the wife of Richard Galloway, Jr. The supporting statement in the inscription that the sitter was sixty-seven in 1764 makes it possible to identify her among the several Sophia Galloways of the time, for although a record of her birth has not been found, her death on January 27, 1781 "in her 85th year of age" is entered in the register of births and deaths of the West River Meeting of the Society of Friends.<sup>4</sup> Both the Richardsons and the Galloways were Quakers and in the portrait we see Sophia in the unadorned dress of the sect, a woman of character and quiet dignity. She is shown in a typical pose of the time against a gray background. Her gown, of heavy silk or satin, is tawny in color, her cap, fichu, and undersleeves, white. The chair at her back is upholstered in a stuff of deep ultramarine blue. The landscape is composed of blue-green trees, olive-green in shadow, beneath an intensely blue sky heavy with rosy clouds. The marble-topped table upon which she leans occurs in several of John Hesselius's portraits, notably in the one of Mrs. Gavin Lawson (Fig. 2), dated 1770. The composition of this latter painting, with its strikingly similar background and landscape, suggests, moreover, the original size and proportions of the Galloway portrait which, as the edges of the canvas show, has been cut down from a larger painting.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the inscription has made it possible to trace the history of the painting from the sitter in the eighteenth century to its last owner in the twentieth before it passed into a public collection. The genealogies of the Galloway, Sprigg, and Mercer families supply the story. On September 29, 1715, Sophia Richardson was married to Richard Galloway, Jr. who inherited Cedar Park, built by his father, one of the oldest large dwelling houses in Maryland, and here, after the death of her husband, she continued to live for many years as a widow. The only child mentioned by Richard, Jr. in his will, probated October 28, 1741,<sup>6</sup> is Elizabeth (born 1721<sup>7</sup>) who inherited her father's estate. Elizabeth married Thomas Sprigg, and their son Richard, married in 1765,<sup>8</sup> had a daughter Sophia who was born in 1766.<sup>8</sup> She married John Francis Mercer (1759-1821)<sup>9</sup> of Virginia, through whom Cedar Park descended in the Mercer

line. Their son John (born 1788)<sup>10</sup> had a son Thomas Swann Mercer (born 1821) who was the father of Carroll Mercer (born 1857). Thus we have a substantiation of the family tradition that the portrait was never out of the hands of descendants of the sitter until it was acquired by The Metropolitan Museum.

<sup>1</sup> The inscription is located in the upper center of the back of the canvas. The capital letters average about one inch in height and the inscription occupies an area of, roughly,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  x  $14\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The painting has now been relined so that the inscription is once more covered up.

<sup>2</sup> Gustavus Hesselius, *An Exhibition Held at The Philadelphia Museum of Art*, 1938. Catalogue number 2.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore Bolton and George C. Groce, Jr., "John Hesselius", *The Art Quarterly*, Vol. II, 1939. To their admirable account of the activities of John Hesselius the authors have appended a catalogue of his portraits. This includes only those which are signed or inscribed. The earliest listed is Mrs. James Gordon, dated 1750; the latest, Mrs. Thomas Gough, dated 1777. Although some of the sitters are Virginians there are no inscriptions here catalogued to support the conclusion that Hesselius painted them in Virginia. The portrait of Gavin Lawson, however, belonging to Hugh D. Rose, Esq., is inscribed: Gavin Lawson Aetat 30 J. Hesselius Pinx. 1770 Virginia June 21st.

<sup>4</sup> For this date I am indebted to Harriet P. Marine, custodian of records, Baltimore Meeting of the Society of Friends.

<sup>5</sup> The present size of the Galloway canvas is  $36\frac{3}{4}$  x 30 inches; that of Mrs. Gavin Lawson is 50 x 40 inches.

<sup>6</sup> *Maryland Calendar of Wills*, compiled and edited by Jane Baldwin Cotton, Vol. 8, p. 152.

<sup>7</sup> *A Register of the Births and Burials of friends and their children that belongs to the men and weomens meeting at West River In Ann Arundell County in Pedigrees of Thomas, Chew and Lawrence*, by Lawrence Buckley Thomas, 1883, p. viii.

<sup>8</sup> John Martin Hammond, *Colonial Mansions of Maryland and Delaware*, 1914.

<sup>9</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography*, 1933.

<sup>10</sup> This and the following Mercer dates were very kindly supplied by Lawrence J. Morris, Esq. from notes in a Mercer family Bible.

## TRAGEDY AND COMEDY IN TWO UNKNOWN BAROQUE DRAWINGS

By ALFRED NEUMEYER

THE cities of San Francisco and Sacramento contain today a considerable number of unknown baroque drawings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Rembrandt and Claude Lorrain, Callot and Ostade may be found in the Crocker Collection in Sacramento (see publications by the author, and by N. Trivas in *Old Master Drawings*, 1938-1940), while the eighteenth century is represented by several drawings of Boucher, Fragonard, and the minor masters of the eighteenth century. Some of the drawings have come to the museums of San Francisco, and among them two are introduced here for their historical significance.

The first one (Fig. 1) is a lively colored brush drawing (183:353mm.) which bears the signature, "P. Lesueur peintre fecit février 1780". We are very little informed about the author of this freely sketched drawing, Pierre Etienne Lesueur from Nîmes. We do not know his birth date, but find him as a stage designer connected with the theatres of Paris (see cut), and conclude from the subject matter that this is the work of the stage designer Lesueur and not of the contemporary figure painter of the same name (see *Thieme-Becker*, XXIII, 135). After the French Revolution he leaves his country and works in Hamburg and Copenhagen where he dies in 1802. His style is that of an artist educated in the manner of Fragonard, handling the brush fluently like a writing pen which he has used in some instances in connection with the brush. With a few lines and spots he is able to describe the essential in face and gesture. His form is aiming toward illusion and he achieves it by delicate use of line and wash. The hardening doctrine of classicism has not yet sterilized his forms.

Our drawing represents the acclaim of a bonneted and short trousered gentleman drawn on a chariot by six half-naked children coquettishly characterized by their headgear as lady and gentlemen *putti* of Louis XVI breed. The acclaimed young man (the handclapping people are lightly brushed in at the left side) carries in his left hand a brightly radiating lantern, holding on with his right to the allegorical woman figure of a fool who leads the way while her eyes rest admiringly on the gentleman. The other side of the carriage is guarded by a turbanned figure who shoulders a lance, apparently domesticated into a spinning staff, clasping a sickle in the other hand. Behind the

chariot we recognize the dimly brushed figure of a flag-bearer, while the flag itself shows a reverse *pot de chambre* and an undecipherable inscription. The triumphal march joyously acclaimed by the juvenile people, brings horror and distress to the group at the right. Fearfully the Junonian queen shrinks from the radiating light and gaiety of the pageant; tearfully the Grecian girl next to her veils her face, mask and tambourine at her feet. The male hero, in the imposingly plumed helmet and the rushing-trimmed cuirass, his war trumpet lowered to the earth, with a farewell gesture casts a last glance to the triumphal scene and departs.

The very inscription implies a theatrical event, a dramatic one in so far as its contrasting mood is concerned. The pageant finds its partial explanation through the allegorical figure of the woman fool, undoubtedly the spirit of Comedy. The right side can then be nothing but Tragedy, departing in defeat before triumphant Comedy. But who is the triumphant gentleman in revolutionary bourgeois costume bringing "illumination" (i.e., the light of reason) by means of comedy to the historical stage, frightening away the dusty spirits of aristocratic tragedy? In Beaumarchais' essays we find this sentence written as though in explanation: "Of what interest to me, peace-loving subject of an Eighteenth century monarchy, are revolutions in Athens or Rome?"<sup>1</sup> There can hardly be any doubt that the author of this statement and the "Poeta Triumphans", the bringer of gaiety and light to the French stage, are identical. If we examine the date of the drawing, 1780, in its relation to Beaumarchais' life, we find that the man who questioned the modernity of the antique drama had presented his *Barber of Seville* in the Comédie Française aux Tuilleries on the 23rd of February, 1775, attended by everybody whose names spelled power or taste in France. Although the income from tickets was unusually high, the success was far from satisfactory. Yet it seemed the general opinion that the "Italian Comedy" in the hands of Beaumarchais would lead to further triumphs, and so it happened. Louis XVI in reading *Figaro* (published in 1785), took the part of our aristocratic tragiennes, saying, "C'est détestable; cela ne le sera jamais joué . . . cet homme se joue de tout de qu'il faut respecter."<sup>2</sup>

*Figaro* was performed, and the king retired with the stilted muses of Racine. *The Triumph of Beaumarchais* would then justly be the title of our drawing, an amusing document for the literary implications connected with the dawn of the French Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The second drawing (Fig. 2) (Phelan Collection, M. H. de Young





Fig. 1. PIERRE ETIENNE LESUEUR, *The Triumph of Beaumarchais*  
 San Francisco, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum



*Fig. 2. ANDREAS SCHLUETER, Dying Warrior  
San Francisco. M. H. de Young Memorial Museum  
(James D. Phelan Memorial Coll.)*



*Fig. 3. ANDREAS SCHLUETER,  
Head from the inner court of the Arsenal  
Berlin*

Museum, San Francisco) contrasts wholly in spirit and mood with the *fin du siècle* sketch. It is a large charcoal drawing on ochre paper (508:305mm.), drawn in wavy lines in one continuous rhythm, streaming symmetrically from a middle axis like water from a water-shed. While the expression of the face radiates *terribilità*, its formal realization is one of organized sensitivity. Lacking a defined contour, the head seems to emerge directly from the paper ground and to proclaim its plastic reality without recurrence to any of the usual means of draughtsmanship. Although highly sensitive to light, it is not a light and dark study; although rhythmically organized, no emphasis is placed on the individual line. The form seems to be conceived in masses rather than in relationship to linear description, and in order to express these plastically animated masses, groups of undulating lines are bundled together. These wavy and re-echoing lines do not only characterize surfaces but in their bilateral correspondence they create a rhythmical pattern.

Although at first glance the element of stylization seems to prevail, a closer examination reveals that the head is drawn either directly from nature or at least with intent to give the expression of intense reality. While, for instance, the eyelid of the left eye with its blacker shadows is pulled down nearly to the point of being closed, the right eye is slightly more open with the pupil visible. The deep shadows in the agonized mouth also portray an impression gained only by a direct contact with nature. From whatever angle we look at this drawing it seems unconventional, escaping the usual terms of stylistic characterization. The same would be true of its characterization in regard to time and locality. That it must be "Baroque" we imply rather from the "heroic" mood than from form proper. The "Laocoön" character of the subject would move the drawing toward the Roman sphere. But the penetrating realism blended with grand stylization goes much farther than Italian Baroque drawings in general.

We might be at a loss to identify this drawing, unique in subject and quality, nourished by all fresh sources of inspiration, if a work of architectural sculpture did not come to our assistance. Twenty-two heads of dying warriors embellish the keystones above the arched windows in the inner court of the Arsenal (Zeughaus) in Berlin Unter den Linden. It is for this group that our drawing must have been done as a preparatory study by the sculptor. Andreas Schlüter—an explanation for its extraordinary quality—since he is the greatest sculptor of the north in the Baroque era. Called from Poland to Berlin, where he had worked from 1689 to 1693, he dedicated his talent from then on to the glorification of the rising dynasty of Brandenburg. After a brief informatory trip to

Italy and France he sets himself to work in 1696 and carves the heroic masks for the new Arsenal, the building just designed in the "Roman manner" by A. Nering and completed by M. Gruenberg. There is something unique in this Prussian-Brandenburgian conception of government that places the Arsenal next to the Grand Elector's castle, in the very heart of the capital. But there is also something typical in the fact that the Grand Elector had so high an opinion of the function of the army within his government that the very best sculptor of the northern region was summoned to spiritualize the utilitarian task of his central military storehouse. Schlueter solved the problem in the manner of a true genius. Instead of a boisterous glorification of monarchy and army (as the nineteenth century may easily have produced it) his vision directed him toward the universal aspects of war, suffering and heroism. The great sculptor varies in twenty-two paraphrases the expression of agony and resistance in the faces of dying barbarians.

While the originals are still *in situ*, only a few bozzetti<sup>4</sup> have remained, and not only can we find no drawing for this monument but we do not know any drawing ascribed with certainty to the artist. This raises the question of whether we would be entitled to declare our drawing as an original by Schlueter or as a work by an unknown artist after his sculpture. If we should find elements in our drawing which in their details go farther or less far than the sculpture, then the probability grows that we are dealing here with an original sketch, and indeed in three instances, we find indications that this sketch must have been conceived before a model bozzetto or in free inspiration, but not in front of the finished sculpture. Nowhere amongst the heads do we find the lively contrast between the two eyes we have mentioned before, a feature drawn from nature (or imagination) but not from the stone. Secondly, the drawing omits the architectural scrolls which we find above the head of each figure (Fig. 3), and leaves undefined the place where the head connects itself with its architectural setting. Finally, as far as we can see, the drawing corresponds to none of the heads precisely, but rather gives the ideal middle type between several of the heads. All these facts combined would indicate that this drawing could hardly be a copy from a work already conceived.

At this point we are prepared to note the quality of line and of light in our sketch. Such a freshness of rendition could hardly be imagined had the designer been placed in front of the carved keystone. And while the flickering light on the richly modeled but soft surface finds a ready explanation after a glance at the clay models for the heads, it is difficult to imagine a copyist who would gain



such an inspired representation by means of black and white from the cool color of the stone carvings. In conclusion we may say that the quality of the drawing is so high that we do not know any German artist of the seventeenth century or eighteenth century capable of doing it; the character of rendition is too direct to make a copy thinkable. For these reasons we ascribe the drawing to Andreas Schlueter.

Both our drawings are extremely different in quality and spirit, but both of them have an element of the typical to lend them documentary character. Besides their esthetic qualities of charm and grandeur, of wit and *terribilità*, they bespeak the spirit of their times by their literary message.

<sup>1</sup> P.A.C. de Beaumarchais, *Lettre modérée sur la chute et la critique du Barbier de Seville*, Oeuvre Complète. Paris, 1809, I., 365.

<sup>2</sup> Mlle. de Campan, Mémoires quoted in Louis de Loménie. *Beaumarchais et son temps*. Paris 1873, KK, 245.

<sup>3</sup> See the author's review of M. W. Brown, *The Painting of the French Revolution*, in *Art Bulletin* XXI (1939), 207.

<sup>4</sup> Two bozzetti reproduced in Heinz Ladendorf, *Andreas Schlueter*, Berlin, 1937, pp. 20, 21.

## ACHELOUS BANQUET

By JULIUS S. HELD

*Dat 'er veele zyn, die de fabelen van Ovidius van buiten kennen, stellen wy vast; maar van binnen zeer weinig. 't Is meest uit de printboeken en niet in de grondtext, dat men tegenwoordig zoekt. (That there are many who know the fables of Ovid from the outside we admit; but few from the inside. At present one looks more into the illustrated editions than into the text.)*

*G. de Lairese, Het Groot Schilderboek, Amsterdam, I, 2, p. 124 (edition of 1740).*

EVERY student of the art of the Renaissance and the Baroque is familiar with the amazing popularity of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in these times. A steadily growing literature points out how indispensable a knowledge of Ovid is to anyone who wants to understand the subject matter of a majority of the mythological stories of that period. Thanks to Henkel's valuable and thoroughgoing study<sup>1</sup> we are also aware of the fact that fixed iconographic traditions of Ovidian subjects were established chiefly by the illustrations in a few outstanding editions of the *Metamorphoses*. Any study in this field serves, indeed, only to bear out the observation of G. de Lairese that many artists of his time knew hardly more of Ovid's fables than what they saw in illustrated editions. But if this state of affairs appeared to Lairese as a cause for lament, it turns out to be a great help to the modern scholar who is interested in iconographical studies. It is actually by virtue of the illustrated editions of the *Metamorphoses* that we can establish with certainty the meaning of a subject which seems to have been fairly popular with leading Flemish artists of the seventeenth century.

Outstanding at the recent sale of paintings from the Untermeyer collection was a fairly large Rubens, generally known as *The Feast of the Gods* (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> The painting shows in the center a group of nude men seated around a table which is covered with edibles, mainly seafood. Fish and shells cover the ground in front and the walls of the cavernous structure behind and above the figures. There are nymphs with a cornucopia, a naiad and a triton, carrying more crustacea at the left, and at the right servants attending to the drinking vessels. In the center of the picture is a reclining bearded man, adorned with the wreath of reed associated commonly with an ancient river-god. He is pictured, it appears, in the midst of a narrative which seems to refer to something outside the cave. His left arm points out towards the river in the distance and his story is followed by the others with keen attention,

even amazement, mingled in some with doubt. One is reminded of the disciples and their reaction to Christ's announcement of His betrayal in most of the presentations of the Last Supper since Leonardo. This concentration, even tenseness in the faces, the obvious distinction between narrator and listeners, would seem to indicate that the subject is something more clearly defined than just a "Feast of the Gods"—not to mention the fact, otherwise rather strange, that no female deity takes part in the banquet.

The subject of this scene is, indeed, quite definite. It is taken from a story in the eighth book of the *Metamorphoses*, verse 547-576. Here we read how Theseus, returning from Crete with his friends, is stopped by the river Achelous, swollen high by torrential rains. The river-god advises the hero against a crossing and invites the group to dwell with him until the rains have subsided. Theseus, in a wonderfully laconic retort, accepts "both—advice and hospitality."

They go into Achelous' house, a cave made of hollowed pumice and tuff, whose ground is covered with moss. Shells, alternating with corals, cover the ceiling. Theseus and his friends—of whom Pirithous, "Ixion's son," and the elderly Lelex are mentioned by name—sit down to a meal. Barefooted nymphs wait on them. After the wine has been served in precious cups, Theseus gives the cue for a story by asking for the name of an isle which can be seen outside the cave. Achelous obliges by telling the story of the transformation of the five Echinades into as many islands because they had neglected to invite him to a party. He goes on to relate—obviously enjoying this chance to talk about the past—how Perimele, to whom he had done violence, was thrown into the water by her infuriated father; but Neptune, upon Achelous' entreaties, had changed her also into an isle, which the river-god continues to embrace forever.

It is easy to see that Rubens' painting fits this story well enough. The setting—painted in Jan Brueghel's delicate and meticulous workmanship—corresponds clearly with Ovid's description, although its neat arrangement of shells seems more typical of a baroque "cabinet of curiosities" than of the cavern of a fabulous river-god. The main actors of the story are also easy to identify: the bearded man in the center as Achelous, the hero in front of the table as Theseus, at whose feet weapons and shield suggest his mission, and the youth who looks at him questioningly as his beloved Pirithous. It remains doubtful which is Lelex, "animo maturus et aevo,"<sup>3</sup> although we may assume that his is the head at Theseus' left. Particularly interesting is the introduction

of the cornucopia at the left, for it proves how well Rubens knew his Ovid. When Achelous had finished his story, Lelex told the strange fate of Philemon and Baucis, whereupon Achelous continued with the story of Proteus and Mestra and in the ninth book went on to tell of his battle with Hercules in which he lost one of his horns. This same horn, which the nymphs had filled with fruits and flowers, is then brought in by a nymph "dressed like Diana" and a servant with her hair hanging down on both sides who offer the guests these fruits of autumn as an ending to their meal.<sup>4</sup>

Although it would appear that all the elements of the Ovidian story are present and no reasonable doubt can be entertained about the subject, it seems advisable to check the interpretation by reference to the iconographic tradition of representing this scene. We find indeed that far from being unique with Rubens, this story is frequently illustrated in sixteenth and seventeenth century editions of the *Metamorphoses*.

It seems to be found first in a French translation of 1539, entitled *Les XV liures de la Metamorphose D'ouide (Poete treselegāt) . . . traduitz de Latin en Francoys*. According to Henkel,<sup>5</sup> three designers collaborated in the illustration of this book. The woodcut accompanying the story of Achelous' banquet is obviously executed by the artist whose work Henkel described as "coarse, mechanical and uninteresting" (Fig. 2). In fact, it is almost impossible to connect the clumsy little print with a definite moment or aspect of the story. The meal scene at the left is vaguely reminiscent of the banquet, while the right half is related to the story of Perimele, whom Achelous kept floating until Neptune had listened to his prayer. Actually, it is very probable that the woodcut was never designed to fit the story for if we thumb through the whole edition we find that the same block has been used no less than four other times<sup>6</sup> and—what is worse—in no case fits the text any better. We cannot help suspecting that the woodcut actually was made for a different book and was used rather indiscriminately by the publisher of the 1539 Ovid wherever there was a remote similarity to the text. The somewhat antiquated style of the design would also argue for such a theory.

Profoundly different is the case of the famous Lyon edition of 1557 and all its descendants. Our observations can only corroborate Henkel's emphatic eulogy not only of the quality of its woodcuts but also of their notable rôle in the development of Ovid illustration. In Bernard Salomon's woodcut indeed are found for the first time the essential elements of the story as we know it from Rubens' picture (Fig. 3).<sup>7</sup> There is the hollowed-out rock with wide





*Fig. 1. PETER PAUL RUBENS, Achelons' Banquet (Feast of the Gods)  
New York, Private Collection*

meux Meleagre pour leur frere Meleagre, & leur vindrent  
neufues penes, fors à Gorge & à Diane. Et Thideus iust  
de la contrée exillé plein de dueil & d'angoisse, celly e-  
stoit filz Athée confertant à la mort de Meleagre son frere.  
Pour laquelle chose il fut enchaillé à honte du royaume de  
Celidonie, & s'en fuyt à embée en Arges ou il se tint lon-  
guement.

De retour de Thesus de la chasse  
du sanglier, & du logis  
D'achelous.



E pendant Thesus apres la prise du grand  
saglier vouloit retourner vers Athenes, mais  
Achelo\* luy fist barriere & luy ferma le che-  
min par ses fioz & luy pria qu'il sejourna-  
st avec luy troys ou quatre iours tant que les  
fioz fussent retraiz & qui estoient hors de leur canal, car  
tant estoient fiers que tout ce qu'il rencontrent estoit pe-  
rille par les ruisseaux venans des montagnes impetueu-  
sement. Pour escheuer ce peril Thesus alla en l'hostel Da-  
chelous qui estoit paré d'yerre & de vertes herbes. Ache-  
lous qui vouloit les hostes festoyer les fist seoir à table. Pi-  
rothous à senestre & les plus anciens à dextre. Les nym-  
phes les feroient nuds pieds & bien garnissoient les ta-

Fig. 2. FRENCH, XVI CENTURY,  
Illustration from the *Metamorphoses*  
(ed. 1539)

Perimele figliuola d'Hippodamante  
mutata in Isola. 107



Fig. 3. BERNARD SALOMON,  
Illustration from the *Metamorphoses*  
(Lyon ed., 1559)



Fig. 4. DUTCH, XVIII CENTURY, Illustration from the *Metamorphoses*  
(Amsterdam ed., 1732)

openings, the party of men assembled around a table within, and one of them pointing out toward the water. At the right we see two nymphs carrying food and wine. The woodcut differs from Rubens' work in that it depicts not only the storyteller and his audience but the content of his narrative as well. In the background at the extreme left may be seen Hippodamas in the act of throwing his daughter Perimele from a rock, and below it Achelous who holds the girl in his arms while turning to Neptune in his chariot. Although smaller, this part of the picture is the true center of interest to which the scene in the cave is definitely subordinated as incidental. The attention of all the figures is focused on the events outside, as if they saw them actually taking place and not only in their imagination, however much stimulated by Achelous' vivid narrative.

The combination in one picture of events of different degrees of reality—one actual and present, the others past and only evoked in a narrative—has, of course, an inherent weakness if judged for its dramatic unity. Salomon's woodcut makes Theseus and his friends eyewitnesses as it were of events which had occurred long ago. There was, of course, nothing unusual about this method of illustration. Moreover, Salomon's version remained the prototype for all future illustrations of Achelous' banquet in printed editions of the *Metamorphoses*. As late as 1732, in the Amsterdam edition of that book, illustrated by Picart and others, we find a print in which both the meal scene and the story of Perimele are combined, the latter being almost identical to its rendering in Salomon's woodcut (Fig. 4). In the eighteenth century engraving, however, the cave of Achelous clearly dominates the scene, whereas Perimele's history is told on a minute scale far in the distance; in fact, it remains unobserved by the people in the foreground and is even technically beyond their field of vision because of the large pillar of rocks which forms a part of the entrance to the cave. By giving emphasis to the meal scene and to the individual characterization of the people participating in it, the later draughtsman follows an arrangement which we first found with Rubens, but he does not understand the intentions which guided the Flemish master. For it is in comparison with the traditional illustration of the story that one becomes fully aware of the significance of Rubens' version.

It seems that Rubens, in his efforts to bring to life and to visualize convincingly the mythological subject, became conscious of the necessity of distinguishing clearly between the two parts of the story. To him, as a man of the Baroque, the unity of action was just as essential as that of space, long rec-

ognized before. Thus he limited himself to one part of the narrative; he concentrated on the foreground, even to the extent of letting Jan Brueghel lavish all his virtuosity on incidental details, and showed nothing but the river and a piece of land in the distance. Little may he have suspected that with just this logical clarification of the picture's story he contributed largely to hiding its true meaning from later generations. There were not enough "clues" left to identify the figures and as *The Feast of the Gods* it made its way through the world.

Nor was it alone in this fate. Rubens' younger fellow-countryman, Jacob Jordaens, treated the same subject in a drawing, depicting also nothing but the scene in Achelous' cave.<sup>8</sup> The subject of this drawing, too, has been unidentified until now. The original belongs to the Albertina and was published once in Muchall-Viebrooks *Flemish Drawings*<sup>9</sup> under the title: *Mythological Subject (Jupiter and Mercury visiting Peasants?)* (Fig. 5). Considering the plainness of the setting and the restricted number of figures, it would seem that Jordaens follows B. Salomon more closely than Rubens. He also, however, omitted the Perimele incident and gave only the scene of the banquet. We see Achelous at the right, two nymphs next to him, and to the left Theseus with the elderly Lelex behind the table and the youth Pirithous in front of it. The figures, it is true, have no classical proportions nor do they strike heroic poses. One can understand how it was possible to think of them as peasants, especially if one sees how much they resemble actual peasant types in Jordaens' early pictures of the *Satyr and Peasant* (as for instance the one in Kassel), not to mention the obvious compositional similarities in such pictures. Yet there is no room for doubt that we have actually the Ovidian story in this drawing. Not only is the cave a telltale feature but also the pointing hands and particularly the intentness which all figures show in looking toward something outside to which the speaker on the right is referring. Although there is actually not much formal similarity between Rubens' painting and Jordaens' drawing, it is notable that both depict only Achelous' banquet. Since a coincidence would be rather unlikely it is justifiable to ask which picture was done first in order to establish the priority of this approach to the subject.

The date of the Rubens fortunately can be determined with fair accuracy. Most experts are agreed in dating it around the middle of the second decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> The comparative opaqueness of the modeling of the flesh, certain awkward poses and lack of a general rhythmic correspondence of movement are indications that it is prior to the typical products of





Fig. 5. JACOB JORDAENS, *Achelous' Banquet*  
Vienna, Albertina



*Fig. 6. JACOB JORDAENS, Two Heads  
Formerly Berlin Art Market*

the second half of the 1610's, when Rubens' design of groups became increasingly fluent and his color more transparent. However, there is an opportunity to fix a *terminus post quem*: the figure of Theseus himself—if he can be recognized in the hero in the left foreground—is represented in a pose which is often met with in Rubens' work. Its first appearance is in a drawing for the famous *Baptism of Christ*<sup>11</sup> for the Mantua Altarpiece. Except for the hands, the pose of the man in the center is identical with that of Theseus. This figure was not taken over into the finished version of the composition, now in Antwerp. Yet Rubens was much too economical to discard such a figure entirely. He used it the next time for a St. Sebastian in a study for the All Saints composition for the Breviarium Romanum which was commissioned in 1612.<sup>12</sup> Here even the arms are practically identical with those of Theseus.<sup>13</sup> A third time we meet with the same figure in a sketch for an altarpiece which he never finished.<sup>14</sup> All these examples agree with each other and are unlike the Theseus in the Untermeyer picture in one respect—they show the figure turned to the left while Theseus is seen in reverse, turned to the right. Yet it is just this difference which links up Theseus with the St. Sebastian of Theodor Galle's engraving from the Breviarium Romanum, which was made from the Vienna drawing and published in 1614. It is only reasonable to assume that in planning the design of the Untermeyer picture Rubens made use of Galle's engraving which conveniently reversed one of Rubens' own drawings. Galle's engraving was hardly done much before the date of publication. The margin left for the dating of the Untermeyer picture is hence rather narrow: not before 1614 (assuming that Galle's engraving was not finished long before publication) and not much later than 1615 (for the stylistic reasons mentioned before).

As to Jordaens' drawing, it certainly belongs to his early period with its somewhat broad use of the pen and wash. We know that Jordaens was active around 1615 and perhaps even before that date,<sup>15</sup> but the Vienna drawing probably was not done as early as that. We have, in fact, an additional monument which enables us to give it a more precise date. Many years ago there was on the Berlin art market a sketch which at that time was called *School of Rubens* and to my knowledge has never before been associated with Jordaens. This hitherto unpublished painting (Fig. 6)<sup>16</sup> shows, however, so clearly all the characteristics of Jordaens' style that it can be attributed to this master without lengthy proof. It represents a type of study which, while not unique with Jordaens, is found several times in his work:<sup>17</sup> two detailed sketches of

the same head, seen in different poses, or from different angles, juxtaposed but independent of each other. In this case it is a bearded man in two profile views, once looking down to the right, once looking to the left. It is done in a very coarse, opaque and yet "porous" manner, with vigorous, curvilinear brushwork, and with such a handling of light and dark that the effect of bright sunshine is suggested.

These "sunny" sketches appear in Jordaens' career not before 1618-20 and are most common in the 1620's, for example in his studies for the *Ferry* in Copenhagen and the Brussels *Fecundity*. This sketch, now, stands obviously in close relationship with the Albertina drawing. The right head of the sketch is practically identical in position and shape with that of "Theseus" in the drawing. The similarity is so striking that we must assume one of two things, either that Jordaens used for his drawing the sketch, which he had possibly done before and independent of it, or that he made the sketch later than the drawing as a more detailed preparation for a painting of the subject.<sup>18</sup> Both alternatives tend to date the Albertina drawing in the early 1620's rather than before.

We thus can say with fair certainty that Rubens' painting came first in order of execution and to him goes the credit for having made the iconographical innovation which we discussed. It is simply one more case in which Jordaens followed an iconographical formula of Rubens. Many more such examples can be pointed out, from the very beginning of Jordaens' activity (as for instance the *Daughters of Cecrops* of 1617: which is based on Rubens' painting of the subject in the Liechtenstein Gallery) until late in his career. Yet, Jordaens never copied Rubens slavishly. His Albertina drawing, although indebted to Rubens in a general way, has none of the heroic splendor, not to say elegance of Rubens but instead is a striking example of that earthy, sometimes pedestrian, but always vigorous originality which is a characteristic of the younger artist throughout.



## ADDENDA

In the last issue of *Oud Holland* (V, 1940, p. 145) which the author discovered only after finishing the foregoing article, J. B. F. van Gils published and interpreted correctly a painting by Jan Steen, in a private collection, as containing the story of Achelous' Banquet. Van Gils assumes that Steen used M. Bouché's illustration of that subject, printed in Du-Ryer's translation of the *Metamorphoses* of 1677. Since we can show that the subject was frequently illustrated before, and as no close analogies exist between Steen's picture and the print, this assumption is not necessarily cogent. Bouché's print, however, is interesting in that it contains (with slight variations) the same arrangement as the engraving by Picart (Fig. 4) which obviously is merely a free copy from the 1677 edition.

<sup>1</sup> M. D. Henkel, *Illustrierte Ausgaben von Ovids Metamorphosen im 15., 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*, 1926-27, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sales catalogue of the S. Untermeyer sale, Parke-Bernet Galleries, May 10-11, 1940, No. 52, for all the data on the picture.

<sup>3</sup> Book VIII, p. 617.

<sup>4</sup> Book IX, pp. 90-92.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> Vol. I, p. 35, Vol. II, p. 13, Vol. III, pp. 34, 86.

<sup>7</sup> Our reproduction is taken from the edition with Italian text, published in 1559, which Henkel (*op. cit.*, p. 88, footnote 1) had not seen.

<sup>8</sup> Another instance in which the same subject has been illustrated occurs in the background of a painting in the study room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The foreground shows a large figure of a river-god, holding a tray with fish and lobsters. Another figure, half hidden in shadow, is next to him, on the right. The scene of Achelous' banquet is very small in the distance, but sufficiently clear to be identified as such. The painting is rather enigmatic, especially as the main figure appears to be a portrait. Stylistically, the painting is closely related to Van Dyck and must have been done by a Flemish follower of that master.

<sup>9</sup> Th. W. Muchall-Viebrook, *Flemish Drawings*, London, 1926, No. 53.

<sup>10</sup> R. Oldenbourg, *Klassiker der Kunst*, IV ed: 1615-17; W. R. Valentiner, *An Exhibition of Sixty Paintings and Some Drawings by Peter Paul Rubens*, Detroit, 1936, No. 5, 1615-17.

<sup>11</sup> Louvre 20187; reproduced Glück-Haberditzl, *Die Handzeichnungen des P. P. Rubens*, No. 50; cf. also, *Jahrb. d. all. Kaiserhauses*, XXX, 1912, p. 264.

<sup>12</sup> Albertina 338 (395); reproduced Glück-Haberditzl, *op. cit.*, No. 70.

<sup>13</sup> We may add that the man who sits at the table opposite Theseus is identical in movement—though reversed—with Ixion in Rubens' picture of c. 1615-17 in the Louvre; he appears again as Adam in the panel with Adam and Eve in the Hague where Jan Brueghel also did the landscape.

<sup>14</sup> Museum Boymans; reproduced *Catalogue Rubens-Tentoonstelling*, Amsterdam, 1933, No. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. S. Held, "Jordaens' Portraits of his Family," *Art Bulletin*, 1940, p. 70.

<sup>16</sup> I owe the photograph to the kindness of Prof. Paul J. Sachs, Harvard University.

<sup>17</sup> Other examples in the Museum of Nantes and Ghent.

<sup>18</sup> The same head appears once more in Jordaens' work in another unpublished painting of Ulysses and Polyphemus in the Museum at Moscow.

## WILLIAM S. MOUNT, THE LONG ISLANDER

By JAMES W. LANE

**W**ILLIAM SIDNEY MOUNT, by recapturing on his canvases the moments he had enjoyed in the curious backwater life of Stony Brook, Long Island, has earned the title of the first important American genre painter. The customs he portrayed had surely been going on for generations, since his community, having been founded in 1636, was one of the oldest on Long Island and, for that matter, in New England. But not until the era of Mount, who lived from 1807 to 1868, and whose peak work was from 1835 to 1850, the era called "The Sentimental Years", did this old community have its innings in art.

It was a community where, a hundred years ago, a healthy normal outdoor life went on, but where, if you scratched the surface, you might find one dark night a spiritualist. It was the type of community, along whose locust-lined dirt roads the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow might ride. It was the type of place where the most imaginative of the inhabitants, who were colored, believed in witches and predestination, and unless they knew you, shrank (as the old-timers among their descendants still do), at your approach and almost from the light of day. Yet here an even more strange life went on in the houses of the whites. A deep-seated religiosity expressed itself in a rigid Presbyterianism or Free Masonry, so stressed that life, as though it objected to a strait-jacket, overflowed in a love of practical jokes and playful pranks on overbearing—and also birchrod-bearing—farmers and fathers. The joy that was denied in religion came out in tall stories, in games like mumble-the-peg or activities like ringing the pig or raffling the goose. Colored fiddlers enlivened many a leisure hour, and music was as much a part of the country community as the accordion is to-day in Eastern Europe.

This community, this district, is what modernly comprises the villages of Setauket and Stony Brook, on the north shore of Long Island. It has as yet been unsung. It has had no poet, although Whitman lived less than thirty miles from it, but in Mount it had a painter.

Now, Mount was a curious painter in that, excepting a year or more of study beginning in 1826 at New York's National Academy and an apprenticeship as a sign-painter in his brother Henry's Manhattan shop (1824-1826), he was self-taught. It has been said<sup>1</sup> that he went to study in Düsseldorf, the then fashionable place for the aspiring student painter, but there is no record of it.

The items that show any rapport with Europe are few: a manual and Chevreuil's book on color, the latter translated from the French. The French manual is an elementary handbook, compiled by Cogniet, Ingres, Isabey, Vernet, and Julien, and published by the Académie Julien. When I saw Mount's copy,<sup>2</sup> it was in a patched condition. There are engraved line drawings of birds and animals—it looks like a game of lotto—which the student is supposed to copy, and then a collection of maxims and monitions—a regular art student's bible. Mount's possession of the book by Chevreuil in 1855, according to a memorandum in his notebook,<sup>3</sup> shows acumen. Only LaFarge, among American painters, had awakened to the importance of Chevreuil's discoveries and had in 1868 produced *Paradise Valley* in response to them. It may well be that Mount's charming, undated *Long Island Farm Houses* (representing Setauket), of The Metropolitan Museum (Fig. 1), was in the late 'fifties called forth in all its easy mastery of dappled light and shadows from a deep perusal of Chevreuil's laws. Indeed, we find another entry in his notebooks which, for one of Mount's "liney" technique, is remarkable. "First produce", he says, "the effect of your design in light and shadow; then add your colors in rich tones without disturbing the first effect in light and dark." (*Notebook* of 1855.) This suggests that by the 'fifties Mount had ceased trying to work in rich local tone alone and had given up patterning himself technically—as Washington Allston had firmly advised him twenty years before—after Ostade. The notebook of 1855 not only suggests this, but the idea fits the facts of Mount's paintings. Before 1850, precision of both tone and drawing are commonly indicated in Mount's work; freedom of drawing (to give greater animation) and flatter, all-over tone enter it after that date.

Critics have said that Mount's work in its genre interest is even like Wilkie's. If there were prints after Wilkie, he saw them, but his style, judging from the native and rugged independence of the man, an independence still marking the old-time residents of eastern Long Island, was original and beholden to few preceptors. A man devoid of originality could not otherwise have made in his copybook the following jottings:<sup>4</sup>

Paint in a different style from others as regards size and subject.

When I painted to please myself, I was myself. When one paints to order, he sells his birthright.

Notice with what shrewdness Mount slips into the generic form "one" when it is a question of painting to order. It would be foolish to suppose when men came to him asking for a picture—as was the custom in the nineteenth century

—he could always paint what he liked. As his reputation increased, however, he sold canvases which he had painted *con amore*, like *Nooning*, to the Art Union of New York. These were then engraved, given to many of the thousands of subscribers which that corporation boasted, and thus Mount's name could become almost a household word.

It was doubtless due to some such prominence as that given him by the Art Union that a Mr. Schauss, the agent in this country of Goupil and Company, the Parisian lithographers, selected Mount as the *most national* of our artists to be introduced to France. His pictures were lithographed in Paris by La Salle, and probably because these were thus sent abroad, and even, as Mr. Edward P. Buffet writes,<sup>5</sup> exhibited at the Louvre, there arose the idea that Mount himself had been in Europe.

Outside of time which he spent in New York City, where he commenced as portraitist in 1829,<sup>6</sup> and of visits<sup>7</sup> later in life to Thomas Cole's house and studio at Catskill, Mount was a stay-at-home in Stony Brook, where in the 'thirties and 'forties Inman, who was fond of the place, used to visit. Mount practised farming and appears to have had a deep, if at times mischievous, interest in farmers. In the house where he lived—now known as the Buffet house—there is a genre picture by him of a farmer making a scarecrow that appears to be laughing at him and his black and white dog.

Mount was brought up a Presbyterian. But the notebook of 1855 reveals:

Presbyterianism, how cold and ridged (*sic*). When Sunday should have been a day of happiness it was to me under blueskin discipline a day of gloom. I was pleased when the sun went down and often dreaded when Sunday came, for the thoughts of eternal damnation and brimstone were to be raked over, which to my mind seemed strange when I could not discover anything in nature to bear the doctrine out.

Yet Mount believed in spirits. Again the revealing diary-notebook that served him affirmationally and confessionally tells us that "if all religion is man's invention, then spiritualism must be considered the best of them all."

Mount's spiritualist creed undoubtedly came to him from long and intimate association with the freed slaves of Stony Brook. He did indeed live to read the Emancipation Proclamation; but long before that he had grappled to him with hoops of steel negroes with whom he came in contact. William Walker was painting small character studies of the old, hard-bitten negroes in Louisiana in the 'eighties, but Mount paints colored people not only as though they hadn't a care in the world, as in the negress who stands in the bow of the boat in *Eel Spearing at Setauket* of 1845 (Fig. 2), owned by Stephen C. Clark,



but he paints them with the refined and sensitive faces of the educated, as in *Music Hath Charms* (1847), of the Corcoran Gallery.

The inadequacy of the Presbyterian creed of his fathers made Mount feel that he entered a religious gathering with his fingers crossed. Perhaps, not having the ill-will to poke fun at his church, he veered instead into poking fun at events in real life. In the phrase of Alfred Jones, he had, like many old Long Islanders of his region, "an abundance of good humor and native courtesy". In his notebook<sup>8</sup> we find suggestions for what he thinks will make admirable pictures: (a) "boys caught out", of which we have a sample in the well-painted action-scene of *The Truant Gamblers* (1835) (Fig. 3), of The New York Historical Society, or in the less violent but more fluidly painted *Boys Caught Napping in a Field* (1848) (Fig. 4), with its beautiful landscape background, belonging to The Brooklyn Museum; (b) "a clergyman counting the money after preaching: "Oh! lead us not into temptation"; and (c) a "schoolmaster spraining his ankle, to the great glee of the boys"—the last two being thoughts which apparently were never put to canvas. Some of the remarks in the notebooks seem barbed; yet if the observations were embodied in paint, the resultant picture was free from animus.

The first four or five years that Mount was painting, until 1830, he busied himself with classical and historical compositions and portraits. The style of his early genre is linear and the local color enameled and fascinating. Every evidence shows that he was an assiduous and good draughtsman. His portrait drawings in silver-point (in the Slade Collection, Oyster Bay, Long Island) are technically in the Ingres tradition and are the most refined things he did. But from 1850 onwards, his style in oil changes. *An Ax to Grind* (1850), of The Whitney Museum, and *Figures in a Landscape* (1851), of The Philadelphia Museum, are more freely brushed, as is also the undated *Banjo Player* (Fig. 5) of the Detroit Institute of Arts (exhibited N. A. of D. 1858). Local color begins to go out, its place being taken by an all-over brown and greenish tonality. There is less body color. In short, the work is becoming more romantic, more and more English and French in feeling, and less and less Dutch. Transitional paintings between the two styles are the *Eel Spearing at Setauket* and the *Boys Caught Napping in a Field*, of the late 'forties. Mount's later paintings altogether lack the brilliance of color of his earlier ones, where the faces of his figures, like those in *The Painter's Triumph*, are always ruddy, firm, and apparently well-washed.

What caused the change in style? It may have been Mount's passion for the

out-of-doors—he was a “first-rate fisherman”, according to Lanman<sup>9</sup> which would have made him realize that painting in local color did some violence to the experience of his own eyes. Lanman calls him a thinking painter, with “the habit of tasking his own mind for his subjects, so that you never see him illustrating the pages of any writer, historian, poet or wit”. This praise is a bit fulsome, seeing that Mount’s first four non-portraits or composition pictures were *The Daughter of Jairus*, *The Death of Hector*, *Saul*, and *The Witch of Endor*. Nevertheless, after his early—and successful—immersion in local color, of which his *Bargaining for a Horse* (1835) (Fig. 6), of The New York Historical Society, is the ideal example, Mount began to see nature in a less cut-and-dried style. He realized that he would have to get out and study her with a fresh, simple mind. In a letter dated 1846 he wrote:

I shall endeavor to copy nature as I have tried to do with truth and soberness. There has been enough written on ideality and the grand style of Art, etc., to divert the artist from the true study of natural objects. Forever after let me read the volume of nature—a lecture always ready and bound by the Almighty.

By 1848 he had followed his own good advice and painted, in the *Boys Caught Napping in a Field*, a landscape that he knew well—the waters of Conscience Bay, in which the last of the whaling ships in the East were launched. By 1855, as we have seen, he had his Chevreuil, whose interest in light measurably increased Mount’s *pleinairisme*. Mount did most of his landscape sketching out of doors in pencil and often oil. In his fifty-sixth year either the inclemencies of weather or his own years or both impelled him to devise a portable studio. He could thus reach his favorite haunts for landscape painting and prepare his canvas untroubled by sudden bursts of the elements. The following letter,<sup>10</sup> dated August 5, 1862, to Samuel Avery, one of the leading collectors of the day, is interesting:

My dear Sir, It affords me pleasure to send you a sketch in oil of my Portable Studio—my own design and the first ever Built for a painter, that I know of. The idea has been in my mind about 7 years. The studio was built in May and June 1861 by Mr. Effingham Tuthill, at Port Jefferson, L. Island, under my supervision.

You will please accept the sketch as a present. As requested I send you the measurements. Inside measure—Length from post to post 12 ft. 1". Breadth 7 ft. 1/2". From floor to ceiling 7 feet 9". The studio has six windows (French plate glass) three of the windows are large & three small. It has one skylight English glass. Also two ventilators one at each end of the room. The step to enter is movable & hangs. The door is double & has a small glass in the upper half, with a slide made of wood. The plate glass windows are framed with black walnut & slide into wooden pockets when not wanted. The airtight stove is placed behind the door the siding & floor around it is protected by zinc. The interior of the studio is of a dark brownish color, black & Venetian red, drove thinly with drying oil (no white) so as to leave the grain of the wood & resembles hard finish.

Mr. Avery, I consider it the extract of the finest studios in the world.

Yours, very truly  
W S Mount



*Fig. 1. WILLIAM S. MOUNT, Long Island Farm Houses  
New York, Metropolitan Museum*



*Fig. 2. WILLIAM S. MOUNT, Eel Spearing at Setauket  
Stephen C. Clark Collection*



Fig. 3. WILLIAM S. MOUNT, *Truant Gamblers*  
The New York Historical Society

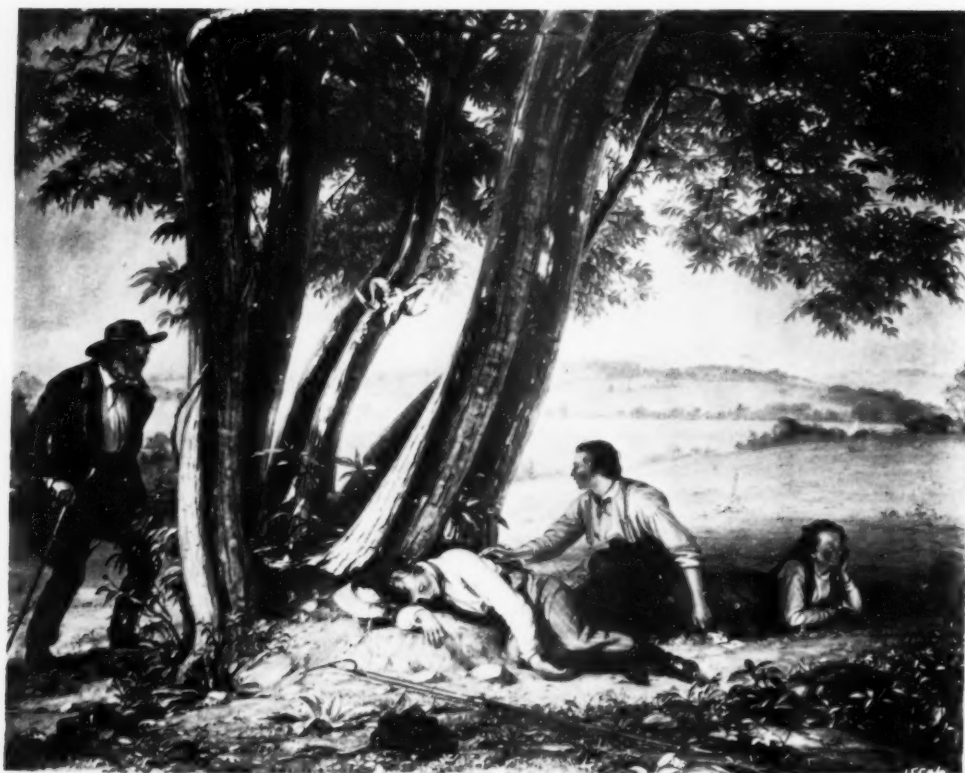


Fig. 4. WILLIAM S. MOUNT, *Boys Caught Napping in a Field*  
Brooklyn Museum



Here in this studio, to which he could harness a horse, Mount could be seen driving through his township of Brookhaven for the last six years of his life. He never went farther than the harbor of Port Jefferson, four or five miles away; but the aunt of a friend of mine said that when she was a child she used to see him coming over to the Strong mansion for tea, walking while he leisurely played the fiddle and paying no attention to his horse, his studio, and his dog, all of which followed sedately to the strains of his music in a long-drawn-out procession. I am inclined to think, however, that Mount never did anything very significant in this studio. His best years were past, and his canvases from 1862 to 1868 seem to be more like fugitive pieces. His power to compose tight, compact little compositions like *Raffling the Goose* (1837), of The Metropolitan Museum, appears to have left him. Nevertheless, his notes at this time show that he was still an active painter. For instance, as of July 1st., 1867, we have:

I have tested my dry cobalts and ultramarine by fire; they are good. The best French Prussian blue by fire (red heat) turned into a brownish black.

Yellow Lake (Robinson's) is a beautiful transparent yellow color for glazing, if durable.

Again, from this notebook, there is perhaps the secret of his own joyousness of color:

If possible make your own canvas. Use raw oil. It will enable you to perfect your work before it dries. Boiled oil to glaze with. In sunny effects varnish first. Then drag the color over when the varnish is half dry.

These random notes in the rather unsystematically kept notebooks give us an idea of the make-up of his canvases. Mount was like all independent countrymen in America in that he had a dogged, sometimes bigoted assurance that his was the right way. If he could not obtain his effects through his own discoveries, painting meant that much less to him, and if he had not done so, he might easily have gone back to his violin and his fishing-rod, his two avocational tools, and made his livelihood therefrom. But as a painter he had success in his day, charging at his zenith in 1855 from \$200 to \$300 a portrait.<sup>11</sup> These finished portraits as a whole lack the charm of his genre, which radiates happiness, health, and humor, at a time when Bingham's genre was more sociological and Blythe's more satirical. In brief, Mount's has the true country spirit and he painted as though he would want it to be, as it is, his greatest monument.

<sup>1</sup> Fern Helen Rusk, *George Caleb Bingham, The Missouri Artist*, Jefferson City, Mo., 1917, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> In the collection of an antiquarian (J. Press, of Babylon, Long Island), who had many drawings, letters and paintings by Mount.

<sup>3</sup> Two of these notebooks, one of 1855, the other of 1867, are in the Richard Handley Collection of Long Island Americana, Smithtown Library Association, Smithtown Branch, L. I., New York.

<sup>4</sup> *Notebook* of 1855.

<sup>5</sup> "William Sidney Mount and His Environment," *The New York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin*, Vol. VII, No. 3, October 1923.

<sup>6</sup> "A Sketch of the Life and Character of William S. Mount," *The American Review*, No. 80, August 1851, later (1857) incorporated into *Characters and Criticisms*, by W. Alfred Jones, New York, I. Y. Westervelt. This is probably the Alfred Jones who engraved Mount's painting *Nooning*.

<sup>7</sup> Evidenced by oil sketches of Cole's home in the Press Collection.

<sup>8</sup> *Notebook* of 1855.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Lanman, *Letters from a Landscape Painter*, Boston, 1845, p. 243.

<sup>10</sup> In the Press collection, but probably now sold.

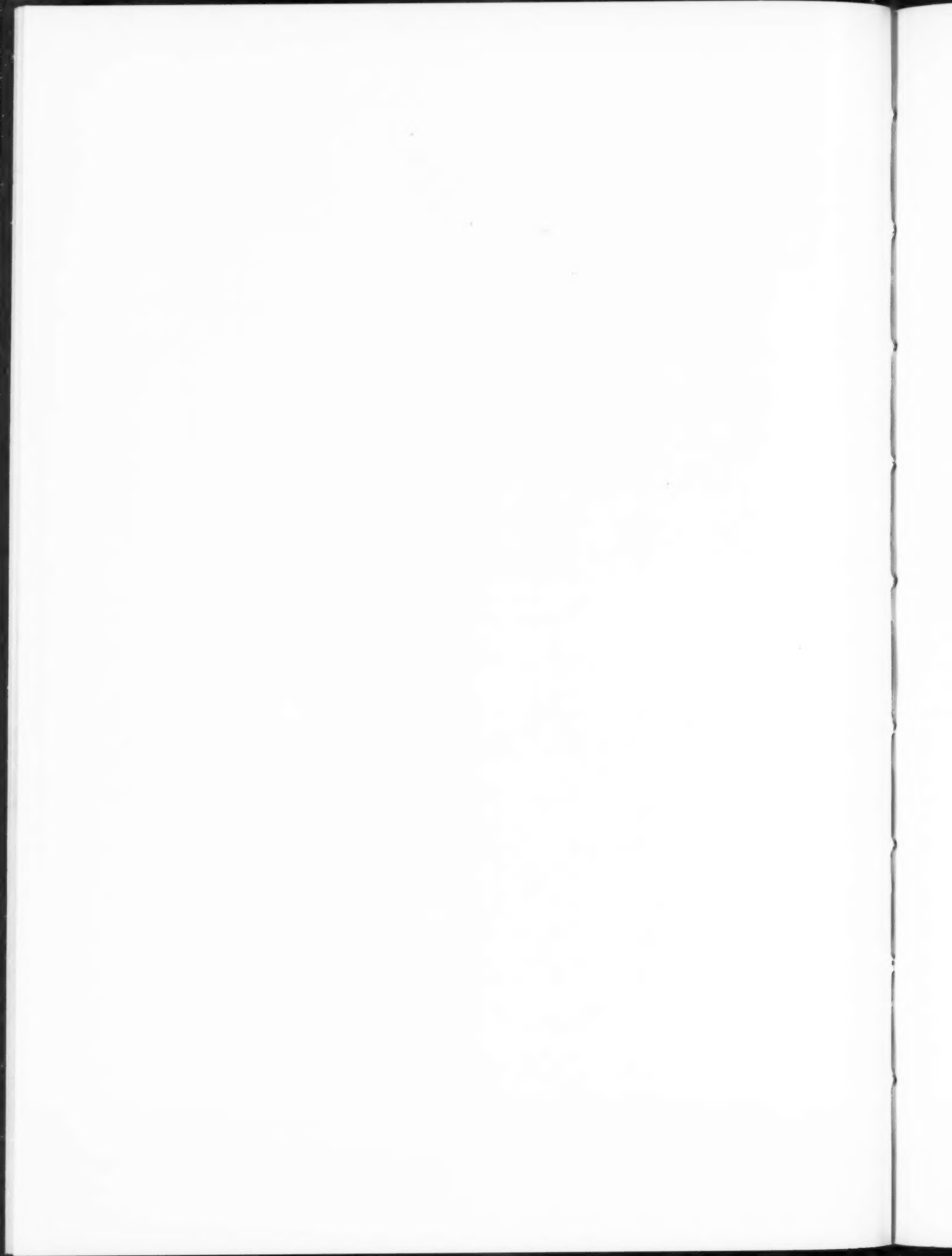
<sup>11</sup> Letter to Edward P. Mitchell, May 25, 1854, in the Handley Collection.



Fig. 5. WILLIAM S. MOUNT, *The Banjo Player*  
*Detroit Institute of Arts*



Fig. 6. WILLIAM S. MOUNT, *Bargaining for a Horse*  
*The New York Historical Society*





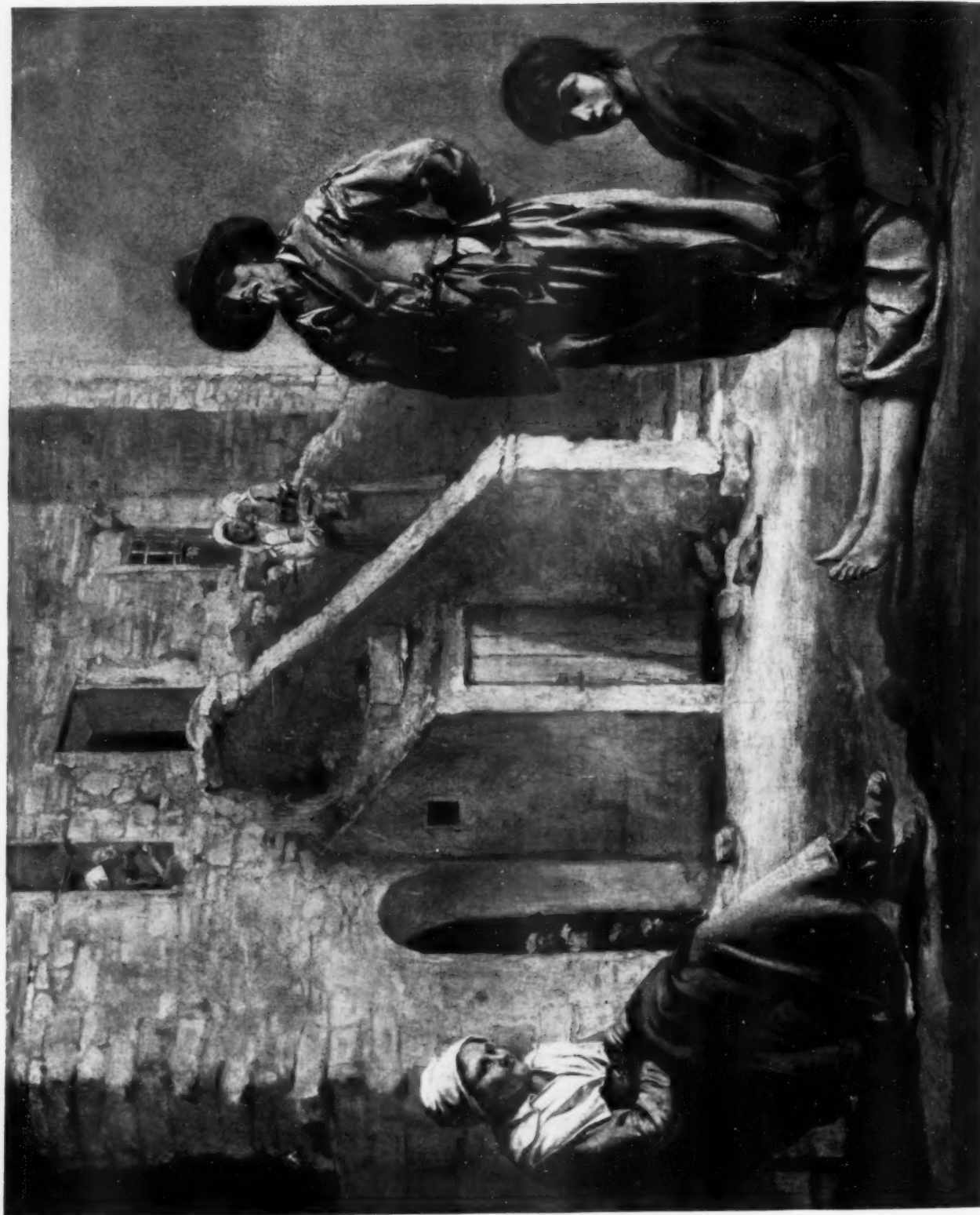
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Recently acquired by the Samuel H. Kress Collection for the National Gallery, Washington, D. C.



LOUIS LE NAIN, *Peasants in Front of Their House* (26½" x 22")  
Recently acquired by the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco





CLAUDE LORRAIN, *Evening* (30¾" x 45½")  
Recently acquired by The Detroit Institute of Arts



EDGAR DEGAS, *Portrait of James Tissot* (59 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 44")  
*Recently acquired by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*

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## THE RECENT ACQUISITIONS

### THE IVORY DIPTYCH AT DETROIT

From an article by Francis W. Robinson in *The Detroit Institute of Arts Bulletin*, May, 1941

By far the largest and most important Gothic ivory carving in the collection on view at the Detroit Institute of Arts is a diptych on the leaves of which, in three registers, are represented fourteen scenes from the life of the Virgin and Christ, so mingled as to make a unit of the two lives from the moment of the Annunciation to the Coronation of the Virgin by her Son. The registers are separated by mouldings ornamented with cinquefoils or rosettes in relief. The two panels are intended to be read together, the scenes running chronologically from left to right through the three registers, beginning at the lower left and ending at the upper right. The subjects are as follows: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Annunciation to the Shepherds, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation in the Temple, Christ Discovered among the Doctors, the Miracle at the Marriage of Cana, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the Coronation of the Virgin. This notable example of Gothic ivory carving is the recent gift of Robert H. Tannahill, whose generous gifts and loans from his collection have greatly strengthened the representation of mediaeval art in the museum.

In 1924 Raymond Koehler published his great three-volume corpus of French Gothic ivories which included over thirteen hundred of the extant Gothic pieces which the author generally attributed to French artists from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. He further indicated that there were many more French ivories unpublished, as well as a great number of Gothic ivories undoubtedly produced in other European countries. The Detroit diptych is, however, neither illustrated nor recorded in Koehler's publication. The history of this ivory is not entirely known but tradition says that it came from the Treasury of the Cathedral of Laon in northeastern France, before passing through the collections of Maurice Sulzbach in Paris and Robert H. Tannahill in Detroit.

The present publication of this diptych throws into the arena another prize for which scholars may engage in combat. What is the time and place of its origin? Is it French, English or Italian? What are its stylistic relations? These are among the problems raised by this ivory. French Gothic the diptych certainly is, in style if not in origin, but the certainty with which almost all Gothic ivories were once attributed to French workshops has been shattered in recent years with the rise of a new discrimination among mediaeval scholars who realize that in a period like the fourteenth century (during the first half of which the Detroit

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ivory was produced) when the Gothic style of France became widespread in Europe, the true picture of the history of this style can only be gained by the separation of Gothic works made in France from those made elsewhere, as in Italy, Germany, England, or Spain, after French models or inspiration.

A study of the style, iconography, provenience and technique of the Detroit diptych favors the assumption that it is a French work of the early part of the fourteenth century. The style seems transitional between the static idealism of the thirteenth century and the affected realism of the second half of the fourteenth century; it has a flowing quality of line and gesture which suggests the curvilinear style of the fourteenth century rather than the angular manner of the early period. The iconography betrays no serious variants from traditional procedure, but here and there are details, like the weeping John at the Crucifixion which leans on the tomb of the adjoining Resurrection, which reveal the tenderness and growing intensity of human feeling which mark the Gothic style as it approaches the Renaissance.

That the Detroit diptych may have once been in the treasury of the Cathedral of Laon, dedicated to Notre Dame, is not in itself sufficient evidence of a French origin, but the subject matter of the diptych, which surely aims at the glorification of the Virgin, suggests it may have come early into the cathedral which bears her name. One technical feature is good evidence for the origin of the ivory north of the Alps and probably in France: the form of the hinges which are set in oblique slots held by pins inserted at right angles to the hinge plates; Italian hinges were commonly of interlocking wire loops.

This discussion reveals rather than solves the archaeological problems presented by this single Gothic ivory carving. On its own merits, as a work of art, the diptych stands firmly among the masterpieces of its period.



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## TIEPOLO'S "MADONNA WITH THE GOLDFINCH"

From a news release

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's *Madonna with the Goldfinch*, a real gem of the master's art, recently acquired by the Samuel H. Kress Collection, is now on loan at the National Gallery in Washington, D. C.

The canvas was formerly part of the famous collection of the Principe del Drago in Rome where it was seen by Adolfo Venturi and described and reproduced by him in an article in *L'Arte*, 1904, No. 1. Eduard Sack, in his great Tiepolo monograph, also described and reproduced the painting, dating it around 1745-50.

The pure and noble countenance of the Madonna is overshadowed by a large yellow cloth, the expression of Her half-closed eyes is thoughtful and while She holds the Child lovingly in Her arms, Her gaze is directed away from Him. She is attired in a blue mantle and a rose garment. The Child seems to be alive, with His large black eyes, reddish-gold curls, rosy cheeks, and His strong white body, delicately rose-tinted at the knees, in the creases of the flesh and at the toes. He is clinging with His right hand to the head of His Mother, holding a goldfinch in His left hand. At the right, behind the Divine group, is an old-gold colored curtain. This, as well as the garment of the Virgin, is characteristic of the inimitable way in which Tiepolo rendered the folds of draperies. The recent successful cleaning of the picture brought out the beautiful vivid colors which were covered by the dirt of the centuries.

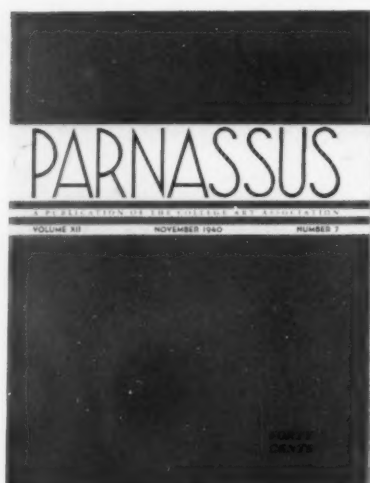
Adolfo Venturi, in his article, points out that in this representation of the Madonna and Child, Tiepolo went back to Giovanni Bellini for inspiration, paying homage to this venerable father of Venetian painting.

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### SAN FRANCISCO'S LE NAIN

From a news release

Louis Le Nain's *Peasants in Front of Their House*, recently acquired by the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, is one of the greatest of this rare and important French artist, ranking with the *Forge* and the *Market Cart* in the Louvre. It belonged to the Dukes of Rutland for over two centuries, having been acquired in the eighteenth century by Charles, 4th Duke, a great friend and patron of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The picture shows a very human scene of a peasant house in Lorraine. The peasant stands in front of his house with the bearing of a nobleman, and in front of him his son is seated with his bare feet stretched out. Opposite him on the left of the canvas sits the wife in her peasant cap, resting after a day's work. On the stairway of the house a girl stands holding a baby, and at the windows and lower door are other peasants. The canvas is bathed in the soft atmosphere of afternoon light.

Referring to the picture, Thomas C. Howe, Jr., Director of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, writes: "This beautiful work by Le Nain is an unusually welcome addition to the Williams Collection, for, while the Museum's representation of seventeenth century European painting is a comparatively generous one, this is the first outstanding example of the French School of that period to enter the collection."

"The works of Louis Le Nain and his two brothers—Antoine and Mathieu—are eloquently expressive of that steady current of realism which has, with varying intensity, persisted throughout the course of French painting. It is not the casual realism of so many of their Dutch contemporaries nor the stark and, at times, satirical realism of their Italian confreres. On the contrary, the Le Nains—and particularly Louis, the most gifted of the trio—endowed their scenes of humble peasant life with

quiet dignity and an imperturbable serenity which impart to them a sober monumentality rarely encountered in the treatment of such subjects. Great distinction of color is also an essential characteristic of Louis Le Nain's work, and all of these qualities are inherent in the painting referred to above. The picture, of which an identical composition is to be found in the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston, was painted toward the end of the artist's life, probably about 1641, and superbly epitomizes the mature style of this very great master."

#### THE DETROIT CLAUDE

From an article by E. P. Richardson in *The Detroit Institute of Arts Bulletin*, April, 1941

The landscape of *Evening* by Claude Lorrain is the subtlest and most poetic example we have acquired of the great seventeenth century school of classic landscape (one of the greatest our civilization has produced), and is in addition the earliest signed and dated painting known by Claude Lorrain. The signature CLAUDIO IV 1631 antedates by eight years any dated painting by him hitherto known and offers welcome information upon Claude's rather obscure early years.

This picture is the first of those hymns to the beauty and splendor of the sun which Claude was to create and it is already upon the true line of his development. But its simple, direct and lyric note is very different from his later work. There is none of the splendor of his pictures of the '40's, the harbor scenes crowded with temples and palaces lit by the setting sun, which were the impression upon Claude's imagination of the grandeurs and the pomps of ancient Rome whose ghost still haunted the silent plains and shores he knew. Neither is there the serene and often elegiac note of the landscapes of his late years, filled with reveries upon the past and inhabited by people from the vanished worlds of history or myth. This picture is a record of the young artist's delight in the beauty of the countryside near Rome, in whose soft sunlight and noble perspectives of river and mountain he was discovering the purpose of his life. If the past is in this picture, it is in the form of the timeless simplicities of the pastoral life of the Italian peasant and in its actual presence before him in the ruined stonework under his feet and the ancient tower which met his eyes upon the hilltop. Later his imagination called up the palace from those stones, re-erected a Roman temple where that Gothic tower now stands, and made an ideal antiquity again inhabit its old scenes.

The Detroit painting, signed and dated 1631, shows what kind of work it was that first began to attract attention to Claude. It is at once more lyrical and more realistic than the later works we are familiar with. Although the tone of revery and pastorage and the highly conscious composition of light are already there, there is a simplicity about the picture that has the quality of direct personal experience. We know from Claude's sketches and from the literary records that he spent these early years in an eager study of nature, setting out before daybreak and returning after dark with his sketches of the landscape about Rome. Sandart says that at this time he was most interested in the light of early morning and in twilight. He lived in what is still the artists' and tourists' quarter of the city near the Piazza di Spagna. From here the road through the Porta del Popolo up the left bank of the Tiber took him quickly into country that offered the long perspectives of river and mountain that appear in this view and which became a constant element in his work. One of his favorite nearby sketching grounds was also just across the river in the grounds of the Villa Madama, where he is known to have done a large painting full of studies of tree forms which he kept in his studio all his life. It is tempting to connect with this garden a drawing in the Teyler Museum, Haarlem, of a woodland path in which stands a statue of the three graces, on the back of which are four quick studies of a landscape composition that appear to be preliminary studies for our picture.

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The realism of the landscape in *Evening* and the genre-like quality of the figures are related in character to the early etchings of 1630-35 and to the two paintings in the Louvre, the *Harbor* and the *Campo Vaccino*, which Claude did somewhere about this time for Monsieur de Béthune. These early works show that Claude's art (unlike Poussin's which sprang from the Italian tradition of heroic landscape) springs from nature. But its stately quality, its note of revery and splendor, was also the tone of the conscious and thoughtful taste of the seventeenth century Roman atmosphere. What Claude's relation was to this Roman atmosphere—not only to the landscapists of the preceding generation like Elsheimer (d. 1610) and Paul Bril (d. 1627)—but to the young artists of about his own age who were in Rome, is a question I cannot go into here. But it is one of the most interesting historical questions upon which our picture may shed some light. Claude's fellow countryman, Poussin (in Rome from 1624), and a group of Dutch and Flemish artists, Poelenburgh (in Rome 1617-22), Bartolomeus Breenbergh (in Rome 1620-22), Herman van Swanevelt (in Rome 1624-37), Pieter van Laer (in Rome 1623-39), were all there with Claude, each playing some part in the formation of a new conception of landscape.

### DEGAS' PORTRAIT OF JAMES TISSOT

From an article by Louise Burroughs in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, February, 1941

The work of Degas, particularly that of his early years, is rich in portraits, yet they were comparatively unknown during his lifetime. When, after his death in 1917, the cumulation of years of brilliant and painstaking production was brought to light from the clutter and dust of his jealously guarded studio, it was found to contain such masterpieces of portraiture—to pick but a few at random—as the *Bellelli Family*, now in the Louvre; the Brooklyn Museum's *Portrait of a Man*; the *Mlle Malo* of

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# L'ARTE

Adolfo Venturi, Director

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the Dale Collection; *Degas's Father Listening to Pagans*; *Etariste de Valernes*; *Emile Duranty*; *Mlle Dubourg*; and the *Portrait of James Tissot* recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This portrait, a work of the late 1860's, represents the artist at a time when he was still young, but experienced, mature. The subtle harmony of its tones, the unerring balance of its color masses, the deft weaving of figure and genre so that its story is told, not by the subject alone, but also by the background — these are the virtues we have come to expect of Degas' most successful portraiture. His peculiar genius, however, appears chiefly in the happy union of an austere and disciplined technique, rooted in the past, with a free and wholly modern spirit. From his study of the old masters and his admiration for Ingres, Degas had developed from the start a firm basis for his original and highly individual expression. This is nowhere more brilliantly demonstrated than in his portraits.

Born at Nantes in 1836, James Tissot went to Paris at the age of nineteen or twenty to study at the Ecole de Beaux-Arts and was soon one of the group of young artists that included Degas and Whistler. Although Tissot is familiar in America chiefly as the painter of a vast series of illustrations for the *Life of Christ*, which had a tremendous success here in the late years of the nineteenth century, his early work reflected a preoccupation with fashionable life and particularly fashionable ladies. Their charming forms and faces attracted him but he delighted above all in every detail of their attire, painting with meticulous care the ruffs and bows, the bonnets, the parasols, and the textures of fine stuffs. Although the work of a very able painter his pictures lack the brilliance of those of his contemporaries and friends the Impressionists. The three unframed paintings in Degas' picture, especially the one at the left—a scene gay with people beneath great-trunked trees—suggest Tissot's style as an artist. His personality is provocatively summed up in the

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portrait. In his clothes we read the dandy; in his carelessly elegant attitude, the man-about-town, sophisticated, assured. His beautiful, effeminate hands imply a sensitive nature which is reflected in his dark eyes, his melancholy expression. His face reveals, too, a suggestion of weakness—a man whose nerves might snap under strain, as indeed Tissot's appear to have done after his gallant participation in the defense of Paris in 1870.

In 1868 Tissot was riding high on the tide of success. The purchase by the French Government of his painting *The Meeting of Faust and Marguerite*, which had been exhibited in the Salon of 1861, gave him a foothold as an artist and also introduced him into the social life of Paris. When Paris was besieged Tissot fought with a small but gallant company known as the *Eclaireurs de la Seine*, but when the Commune rose to power he seems to have lost his head and for a disastrous moment allied himself with this worst element of the revolution. His choice forced him to flee France and he settled in London. His later life is blurred by romance and mystery—a passionate love affair which ended in the death, probably by suicide, of his mistress. It seems to have been the shock of this loss that turned him from painting the charms of the world in which he had delighted to religious works of the most devout nature.

But with this time we are not concerned; it would be a mistake, moreover, to place too much emphasis on the subject of a portrait by Degas, however interesting. For one of the most skillful and subtle aspects of his portraits is his ability to make a general as well as a particular statement; to search out the inner man before him and having found him to make every detail of feature, form, posture, dress, bear witness to him not only as an individual but also as a part of all that he had met—the epitome of his profession, his class, his country, his era. It is this that gives to such a work as the *Portrait of James Tissot*, for all its classical restraint, an essence that is the height of romanticism, this that makes the enjoyment of it one of the great adventures of the imagination.